

The Dragon Slayers:
A History of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel



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Executive Summary

The Arkansas Public Policy Panel (the Panel) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to social and economic justice in Arkansas. The Panel specializes in organizing individuals and groups to create an environment for policy change that creates stronger and more just communities. Organizational members and groups are trained to become active participants in their communities and government. Each year, the Panel awards the Brownie W. Ledbetter Dragon Slayer Award to deserving members that fight the ‘dragons’ of social inequalities such as racism, sexism, and classism.

The origins of the Panel were created in response to Arkansas’ most infamous example of inequality. Nine African American students, in 1957, were denied entry to Little Rock Central High School by National Guardsman ordered to surround the school by Governor Orval E. Faubus. President Dwight D. Eisenhower federalized the National Guardsmen in order to allow the nine students to attend school. Governor Faubus responded by signing pro-segregation legislation that allowed him to close the four schools in the Little Rock School District (LRSD). The closure of the schools prompted fifty-eight women to form the Women’s Emergency Committee (WEC). WEC worked to create a plan to reopen the schools. The schools reopened in 1959 and WEC shifted focus to LRSD school board elections to ensure stable leadership within the district. Many members, by 1963, felt the goal of reopening the schools had been met and voted to disband WEC. Several members of WEC, including Sara Murphy, felt that work was needed to eradicate stereotypes.

Murphy organized the Panel of American Women (PAW) in 1963 by pulling several like minded women together. PAW built a diverse membership of white, African American, Asian, Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic women that gave open dialogue presentations to organizations that requested it. Women representing each race or religion spoke about different prejudices they faced and how it made them feel. The end of the presentation allowed audience members to ask questions about stereotypes to the panel. PAW members openly answered these questions with the goal of disputing prejudices. PAW presentations were successful and membership expanded throughout the 1960s. PAW took its presentations to Pulaski Heights Junior High in 1969, where it performed its first public school workshop. PAW recognized the opportunity to battle injustice within the school system and began to transform its organization. PAW members created a more structured organizational model and began researching funding sources. PAW became a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in 1971.

Murphy became vice president of the national Panel of American Women in 1971. Mary “Brownie” Williams Ledbetter took over leadership of PAW after Murphy’s departure. Ledbetter’s leadership would prove to be the strength and survival of the organization until her retirement in 1999. Her work led PAW to expand its programs with LRSD schools, and receive Emergency School Aid Program (ESAP) and Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) grant funding. PAW, with funding, was able to train members to work with teachers, students, and parents in battling social injustices in schools. Funding also allowed PAW to hire a small staff to handle daily operations. Ledbetter took a leave of absence from PAW in 1976 to help her husband with his congressional campaign, but PAW continued to expand. PAW facilitated programs, such as the Green Circle program,

to battle inequality in schools. PAW also began to expand its focus on the educational system's structure. PAW began to work with other education focused organizations in order to address institutional inequalities. It participated in the Classroom Community Council, Design Cooperative of Arkansas, and the Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association. PAW's work with these organizations exposed a socially biased, inaccurate history textbook that was being used to teach students in Arkansas. PAW began working with University of Arkansas at Little Rock professors to create a textbook with unbiased historical interpretations in 1979.

PAW's membership greatly expanded through the 1970s, but the membership base was no longer exclusive to women. PAW became the Little Rock Panel, Inc. (LRP) in 1980, to clear up confusion caused by its formal name. The organization had received most of its funding from ESAA grants, but federal guideline changes no longer made LRP eligible to receive funding. The lack of funding caused LRP to furlough its employees and the organization became dormant until funding could be obtained. LRP members, between 1981 and 1983, independently focused their efforts on LRSD school board elections while the organization maintained a low profile.

A series of national and statewide policy changes reestablished LRP with Ledbetter at the helm, but required it to refocus its efforts. A national trend toward tax reform came to the forefront during the 1980s. Tax reform widened the tax base, which put the majority of the tax burden on the lower and middle class. The Arkansas Supreme Court, in 1983, ruled that the financing protocol for Arkansas schools was unconstitutional, which left the educational system with a funding shortfall. A one-cent

sales tax was passed, but did not recover expenses. Additional tax increases were proposed and, in response, LRP restructured to focus on tax research and policy change.

It became clear to LRP that a partner organization with a strong coalition of advocacy groups would be advantageous to its work toward equality. The Arkansas Fairness Council (AFC) was established in 1983 as a 501(c)(4) organization with the goal of gathering similar organizations together to create policy change. LRP continued to work on civil rights and education issues throughout the 1980s, but tax policy came to the forefront. LRP worked to obtain grant funding to conduct tax research and AFC worked to build a coalition to fight for economic equality. The complicated nature of tax legislation led LRP to establish the Arkansas Public Policy Project (the Project) in 1985. The purpose of the Project was to conduct tax studies and inform the general public. Information gathered focused on the effects tax legislation had on Arkansans. The Project, funded by several grants, provided suggested adjustments to the tax code to raise more revenue for education and other needed investments while making the whole system fairer.

Realizing it had become a statewide organization, LRP changed its name to the Arkansas Public Policy Panel (the Panel) in 1987. The Panel focused on training and organizing groups that could take part in AFC legislation efforts. The State of Arkansas experienced a budget shortfall during that same year. Governor Bill Clinton proposed an additional sales tax increase to cover the shortfall. The Panel and AFC were against Clinton's tax package. The organizations believed that an additional sales tax increase would put the tax burden on lower and middle economic classes. AFC presented the Fairness Plan in 1987, in response to Clinton's tax package. The plan called for citizens

to be taxed in proportion to their spending and the closure of \$137 million worth of tax exemptions. Clinton's tax package did not pass through the legislature. After the close of the 1987 Legislative Session and the failure of his tax package, Clinton showed interest in AFC's tax proposal. AFC believed its plan for tax reform could be achieved by popular referendum. Amendment 4 to the Arkansas Constitution appeared on the November 1988 ballot. The amendment called for the removal of property tax on household goods and future tax rate changes to be approved by a three-fifths legislative vote or popular referendum. Clinton pulled his support for Amendment 4 before the November election. The ballot measure failed miserably at the polls.

The series of setbacks led the Panel to reevaluate its strategy. The Panel began to focus more on community organizing in addition to public policy. The Panel provided support to organizations that sought social equality. In 1990, Panel members toured the state to find out what issues were priorities in different areas of Arkansas.

Environmentalism emerged as an identified priority because high levels of water and air pollution typically affected lower and middle class neighborhoods. The Panel, by 1993, had developed a network of statewide grassroots groups and organizations. A statewide conference attended by these organizations led the Panel to design the Public Interest Support Center (PISC) project. PISC linked new organizations together and strengthened the bond of the network. PISC also determined issues that were of importance within the network and conducted research regarding those issues. The Panel sent out its first issue of the *Policy Watch* in 1996 to communicate what was occurring around the state and within the organization.

Networks of people the Panel created gathered at the Arkansas State Capitol in 1997 and held a rally in regards to the Takings Bill. For the first time, members gathered alongside the leadership of the organization and talked about how the Takings Bill infringed on individual property rights. The rally demonstrated the effectiveness of diverse groups gathering for a similar cause and was the inspiration for the model to build a larger statewide coalition. The Citizen's First Congress (CFC) first met in September 1998. The CFC absorbed AFC's 501(c)(4) but was different from the previous organization in its efforts to achieve social and economic equality. Instead of leadership setting the agenda as it had with AFC, coalitions met yearly to set multi-issue priorities for the CFC from grassroots members of a far larger and broader membership. This enabled support of the coalitions to give the CFC a more aggressive stance on legislative issues.

Ledbetter had led the Panel through challenges, successes, and growth for nearly thirty years. She announced her retirement in 1999 and recommended Bill Kopsky to take over as executive director. Kopsky had been working with the Panel as an organizer since 1996, and after some hesitation, he accepted the position. Under Kopsky's leadership, the Panel began a strategic planning process in 2000. The strategic planning process helped the Panel better organize itself and streamline its relationship with the CFC. The Panel's staff continued to grow and funding began to expand as larger grants were awarded to the Panel. The CFC also made efforts to become more efficient by organizing coalitions into regional and issue caucuses. The caucuses discuss what issues are important and then

bring them to the statewide conference for nomination. Delegates then vote for their top priorities and the rest of the CFC Conference is spent designing a plan of action for addressing priorities.

The new organizational design of the CFC and the structured support of the Panel led the organizations to experience success locally and in the legislature. The Panel worked to help local organizations and individuals to become active participants in their local governments. One of the finest examples of this work can be seen in Gould. The small Arkansas city faced internal struggles that nearly collapsed its own government. The Panel helped the citizens of Gould organize and identify problems within the city. Gould voted in city leaders that promised to address and fix the city's problems. The Panel facilitated community organizing in Gould and throughout other areas of the state. The web of community organizing the Panel created led to several victories in the Arkansas Legislature. The Panel and the CFC were victorious in achieving the Arkansas Renewable Energy Act, Arkansas Department of Agriculture, and fair election legislation.

The victories the Arkansas Public Policy Panel and the Citizens First Congress have achieved were a progressive step for the State of Arkansas. More important than the legislative victories that have been obtained, is the system that has been created. The lone individual is empowered to become part of an organization that gives that individual a voice in local and state government. Equipped with the weapons to fight social inequalities, the lone individual can become a 'dragon slayer' thanks to the efforts of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel.

Introduction

The Arkansas Public Policy Panel (the Panel) is a unique organization that emerged to confront issues of inequality and injustice. The Panel's fifty year history is rich with various efforts to dismantle inequality and injustice in Arkansas, having a clear mission and goals but a malleable strategy to enable change when needed. What began as a women's organization to create a space for open dialogue about inequality and prejudice in 1963 has since evolved into two organizations that today work together to engage people to improve their local communities as well as bring Arkansans into the policy process. The Panel is a non-profit organization that brings citizens together in local communities to help them become a voice in the public policy process, to achieve social and economic justice. The Citizens First Congress (CFC) is a coalition of organizations that work to lobby the Arkansas legislature for progressive change. This paper explores the history of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel, its evolution and growth across the state, and offers insight into how such an organization has managed to survive. Unfortunately, it was impossible to include every aspect of the Panel's history in this paper. Choosing what stories and events to include was a difficult and much debated process. It is our hope that this document will expand and continue to be enriched with the Panel's history as the organization continues to grow

Chapter One explores the origins of the Panel and the conditions that existed in Arkansas to necessitate its creation. The Central High School Crisis of 1957 and the Lost Year of 1958-1959, led civic leader Adolphine Fletcher Terry to establish the Women's

Emergency Committee to Open our Schools (WEC) that worked toward the reopening of the high schools in Little Rock on an integrated basis. The WEC disbanded in 1963 but one of its members, Sara Murphy, was not satisfied that the group had done enough to ease racial tensions in the city and state. Inspired by a similar group in Kansas City, she created the Little Rock Panel of American Women (PAW), which sought to create an open space for dialogue about inequality and prejudice that female panelists had faced in their lives. PAW changed its format by the end of the 1960s, to address inequality in broader terms, and to increase audience member participation. PAW also began to move its program into the schools to discuss these issues with children.

Chapter Two looks at the incorporation of PAW into a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that allowed it to apply for grants and funding to expand its focus. Mary “Brownie” Williams Ledbetter took over as executive director of PAW in 1971, and was a leading figure until her retirement in 1999. The 1970s saw PAW focus its attention on school children. It hoped to erase discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and faith through educational programs. PAW was able to go into schools with the support of federal funding from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, particularly the Little Rock School District (LRSD), to present multicultural curricula to the children as well as work with teachers and administrators as desegregation increased. One program that continued into the 1980s was the creation of a new book on Arkansas history, to replace John L. Ferguson’s *Historic Arkansas*, which PAW and many partners considered an inaccurate portrayal of the state’s history.

Chapter Three begins with the name change from PAW to the Little Rock Panel, Inc. (LRP). This chapter assesses LRP’s activities during the 1980s, which focused

heavily on tax reform but also saw the launch of the Arkansas Fairness Council (AFC). The 1980s saw LRP expand its focus even further from educating about inequality to researching and proposing state-wide changes to alleviate inequality and injustice. Reflecting national trends, Arkansas faced changes to its tax system following the 1970s recession. A broader tax base was established, which meant that the lower economic classes faced the brunt of increased taxes. LRP created the Arkansas Fairness Council (AFC) to challenge this, which was a precursor to today's CFC. AFC worked to lobby the legislature on issues, particularly tax reform, and bring groups with similar goals to work together. LRP also established the Arkansas Public Policy Project in the 1980s, which conducted tax studies and published reports based on issues important to the Panel. LRP, in 1987, formally changed its name to the Arkansas Public Policy Panel, to reflect its new focus of public policy issues. The Panel supported ballot measure to change the threshold for all taxes in 1988. The measure failed at the polls and, along with other tax related failures throughout the decade, inspired the Panel to begin organizing at the grassroots level. The Panel realized that it needed the support of local communities to advocate legislative change.

Chapter Four assesses the Panel's history during the 1990s, until Ledbetter's retirement in 1999. Just as Chapter Three reflects LRP's focus on tax reform during the 1980s, Chapter Four shows how the Panel worked primarily on environmental issues throughout the 1990s. The organization expanded its presence among local communities, and believed a unifying issue across diverse social, economic, gender, race, and faith groups was the environment. One environmental issue the Panel was able to organize around was the presence of incinerators in Arkansas to dispose of chemical weapons and

waste products. These posed serious health risks to the local community and the Panel worked to educate citizens about the risks of these incinerators and successfully created a coalition of organizations around the issue. The Panel also focused their efforts on the deregulation of telecommunications and energy services. The Panel, in 1993, designed the Public Interest Support Center, a coalition of groups to aid them in forming an issue-based agenda and network with similar groups to affect change. This allowed groups to focus on issues that affected them and not rely on the Panel to decide what issues to tackle. Ledbetter retired in 1999 and Bill Kopsky took over as executive director of the Panel and continued to develop the organization's structure, staff, and funding. The Citizens First Congress (CFC) was established as a coalition based organization to collectively agree on issues to lobby the Arkansas Legislature. The CFC, following its first convention in 1998, decided to focus its resources on organizing communities in south and east Arkansas as their membership was already strong in the central and northeastern parts of the state. To honor the work of Ledbetter, the CFC, alongside the Panel, established the Dragon Slayer Award in 1998, which is given to an outstanding community activist at each CFC convention.

Chapter Five begins in 1999 and provides an overview of the Panel and CFC during the 2000s. The organization's focus turned toward grassroots organizing, legislative issues, and defining an agenda for the CFC to take. The Panel works to aid local groups in identifying issues of inequality that they face and want to overcome. It provides leader development and strategic planning to these groups to aid their process. The Panel's grassroots organizations are key to the CFC's legislative agenda, they bring forward issues that are important to them and want supported by the CFC during

legislative sessions. One of the most successful groups the Panel has worked with is the Gould Citizens Advisory Council (GCAC), which is still working to end corruption in local politics and bring about social and economic change. The CFC, as a coalition group, convenes every other year to choose issues for the following legislative session that they want to support or oppose. Regardless of individual beliefs and opinions, the CFC vote on issues to be a part of its agenda, which are then supported by the organization. Throughout the 2000s, the CFC has supported a wide range of issues, from educational inequality, to election issues, labor, and environmental issues.

The history of the Panel depicts the different methods the organization has taken to bring about equality and justice for all Arkansans. It has grown from a small group of women trying to publically address race and religious discrimination to a statewide organization that works to not only aid grassroots groups to set their own issues and agendas but also to lobby the legislature to remove legal barriers of inequality. The Panel grows from strength to strength, willing to adapt to changing circumstances, and as it is this that has enabled it to survive.

Mothers Take the Lead

The origins of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel lay in Arkansas' civil rights movement. The Central High School Crisis of 1957 denied African Americans access to integrated education, thereby denying them their Fourteenth Amendment rights. The following academic year was known as the Lost Year, as all four Little Rock high schools were closed to ensure integration did not occur. The closure led to the organization of a women's group, the Women's Emergency Committee to Open our Schools (WEC), that worked to have the schools reopened on an integrated basis. This group remained active until 1963 when it voted itself out of existence following the beginnings of desegregation in the city's schools.

What would become the Arkansas Public Policy Panel was established in 1963 by Sara Murphy, a former member of WEC. The Panel of American Women (PAW) was created in Little Rock to "address the problem of race relations directly" and discuss inequality from the perspective of women from different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.¹ The women travelled across the state to inform communities about inequalities they had faced by telling stories, and answered questions. PAW worked to create an open dialogue, to connect people on a personal level and talking about their differences. PAW incorporated in 1971 to become a non-profit organization and expand

¹ Sara Alderman Murphy, *Breaking the Silence: Little Rock's Women's Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools, 1958-1963*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 236.

its work within the educational system.² It was at this point, in 1971, that Mary Williams “Brownie” Ledbetter assumed a leadership role in Little Rock PAW as Murphy became vice-chairperson of the national Panel of American Women.

Establishing Women’s Community Organizing

Sara Alderman Murphy was first introduced to civic organizing through her involvement with WEC. Murphy was born in Wartrace, Tennessee, in 1924 to successful and economically stable parents. She received her undergraduate education in Social Studies and English from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University and went on to graduate school at Columbia University, gaining a Master of Sciences in Journalism in 1946. As a southern woman, Murphy belonged to a small minority who received such a high level of education at that time.³ Her husband, Patrick Murphy, the son of a wealthy plantation family, took a job as an attorney in Little Rock in 1950. Murphy joined the faculty at Little Rock University (now the University of Arkansas at Little Rock) in 1958.⁴ Murphy became a prominent member of WEC, which taught her many of the leadership skills she used as founder of PAW and deepened her commitment to end inequality and prejudice.

² “Articles of Incorporation,” Box 1, Folder 1, *Panel of American Women*, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Little Rock, Arkansas (hereafter PAW Records).

³ Finding Aid, “Sara Alderman Murphy Papers,” University of Arkansas Libraries Special Collections, Fayetteville, Arkansas, <http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/findingaids/saramurphyaid.html> (last accessed 3/22/2013); Paula C. Barnes, “Sara Alderman Murphy and the Little Rock PAW of American Women: A Prescription to Heal the Wounds of the Little Rock School Crisis,” in *The Southern Elite and Social Change: Essays in Honor of Willard B. Gatewood, Jr.*, ed. By Randy Finley and Thomas A. Deblack, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 164.

⁴ Barnes, *Sara Alderman Murphy*, 164-165.

Mary “Brownie” Williams Ledbetter, the driving force behind the Arkansas Public Policy Panel until 1999, also worked with WEC before joining PAW. Born in 1932, Ledbetter was raised in Little Rock, but spent considerable time in Stamps, Arkansas, with her family, which was political and forward thinking on issues of race. Ledbetter moved to Decatur, Georgia in 1950 to attend Agnes Scott College. She spent three years at the college, but did not graduate. According to Ledbetter, she did not conform to the concept of the traditional southern woman, and her behavior at the college “caused a great stir.”⁵ She married Calvin R. Ledbetter, Jr., in 1953, an attorney, political scientist, and member of the Arkansas legislature from 1966 to 1976. The couple moved to Germany for three years between 1957 and 1960 as a result of his assignment to the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General Corps. They were in Europe as the 1957 school crisis unfolded, but Ledbetter followed the events in the international media. When they returned to Little Rock, she began working with WEC. Like Murphy and Ledbetter, many of the women involved in PAW learned about civic organizing through their membership in WEC.

Governor Orval E. Faubus, on September 2, 1957, ordered the National Guard to surround Central High and prevent nine African American students from entering the school. This act led to the federalization of the National Guard to protect the nine students as they attended Central High for the rest of the academic year. Faubus signed legislation that gave him powers to close any school under certain circumstances on

⁵ *Brownie Ledbetter Interview with Jajuan Johnson*, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, February 28, 2007. Available at: <http://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p1532coll1/id/1127/rec/40>.

September 12, 1958.⁶ This was in response to the U.S. Supreme Court decision, handed down that day, ordering the Little Rock School District (LRSD) to begin implementing its integration plan.⁷ Just three days later, on September 15, 1958, Faubus used this law to close all four high schools in the LRSD, prompting Adolphine Fletcher Terry, a well-educated and respected leader in Little Rock society, to convene a group of women to discuss the situation and decide what action to take.⁸

The community of Little Rock suffered greatly from the Central High Crisis. “Everyone was going to have to pay the price: the children who were not in school, the [African American] population whose lives had been violently threatened, and upper-class [whites] whose economic well-being was eroding.”⁹ Terry and Vivian Brewer, another founder, envisioned WEC as an interracial group working to ease these racial

⁶ This was one of fourteen pro-segregation laws passed in the 1958 Special Session to the Arkansas General Assembly. Act 4 provided the governor the ability to close the schools if: there was a threat of violence that would affect the safety of anyone attending the school; school integration was being forced by the federal government; and finally, if a school had been integrated to the detriment of an “efficient educational environment.” Following the closure of any schools, the governor was required to order an election within the school district to allow voters to decide if integration would continue. The schools would remain closed until the governor signed an executive order to have them reopened following the election. The act also provided a means to remove any official, be it a school board member, superintendent, or principal, who did not follow an order to close the schools. For more information see, Sondra Gordy, *Finding the Lost Year: What Happened When Little Rock Closed Its Public Schools*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2009), 31; Sarah Riva, “Acting Up and Courting Controversy: The Arkansas General Assembly Legislative Sessions of 1957, 1958 and 1959,” (MA Thesis, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2013), 46-48.

⁷ Gordy, *Finding the Lost Year*, 31.

⁸ Adolphine Fletcher Terry was born in 1882 to Adolphine Krause and John Gould Fletcher, a businessman and former mayor of Little Rock. Her youngest brother is John Gould Fletcher Jr., a Pulitzer-Prize winning poet. Terry graduated from Vassar College in New York State in 1902 and returned to Arkansas to investigate the state’s education system and lobbied the state legislature for consolidation of Arkansas’ five-thousand school districts. Terry’s father died in 1906 and left her with a wealth of property in Little Rock, making Terry financially independent. She married David D. Terry in 1910, a U.S. Congressman between 1932 and 1942. Terry involved herself with many social and political issues, from improving the status and education of women to racial equality. She was outraged by the 1957 School Crisis but did not act until Faubus closed the schools in 1958. Terry continued to advocate social issues after the crisis, as well as promote historic preservation until her death in 1976. For more information see, Murphy, *Breaking the Silence*, 4-25; Peggy Harris, “Adolphine Fletcher Terry,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=1779> (last modified 12-3-2012).

⁹ Paula C. Barnes, “The Junior League Eleven: Elite Women of Little Rock Struggle for Social Justice,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 57:1 (Spring, 1998): 46-61, 52.

tensions.¹⁰ It became clear at the first meeting that this idea did not have the support of other women, some of whom believed that change through an interracial group was unlikely. These women felt that a more effective strategy was to work as a moderate, single-race organization to reopen the schools.¹¹

Murphy, a relative newcomer to the city, called Terry to ensure her presence at the first WEC meeting was welcome. Murphy felt she was surrounded by “women who thought like [she] did.” She was given the task of contacting women who might be interested in joining and went on to become a board member of WEC in 1962.¹²

Ledbetter however, was not able to participate in WEC during this time as she was still in Europe with her husband. Despite Ledbetter’s physical absence she continued to remain informed about current events in Arkansas through her aunt, Frances Williams, who had signed Ledbetter up to be a member of the organization.¹³

Many of the fifty-eight, upper-class, white, Protestant women who were members of WEC had wealth independent of their husbands and were therefore less susceptible to the economic repercussions that segregationists employed to intimidate men and those of lower economic status. Additionally, membership lists for WEC were kept confidential in

¹⁰ Vivian Brewer was born in 1900 and raised in Little Rock. She graduated from Little Rock High School in 1917 before attending; Smith College in Massachusetts where she studied sociology. Upon return to Little Rock she began work for her father at People’s Savings Bank, before earning a law degree from Arkansas Law School in 1928. She married Joseph Brewer in 1939, and the couple moved to Washington D.C. for sixteen years while her husband held various positions in the federal government. Like Terry, Brewer was financially independent thanks to the inheritance of her father’s wealth. She was asked by Terry to be the chairperson of WEC, which Brewer reluctantly accepted as she lived twenty miles away from Little Rock and had no children. Brewer died in 1991. For more information see, Murphy, *Breaking the Silence*, 73-75; Laura A. Miller, “Vivian Mercer Lenon Brewer,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=2487>, (last modified 12-12-2011).

¹¹ Gordy, *Finding the Lost Year*, 42-43.

¹² Murphy, *Breaking the Silence*, 73-74.

¹³ Stephanie Bayless, “Mary “Brownie” Williams Ledbetter,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=4172> (last modified, 3/13/2013)

an attempt to protect its members from harassment.¹⁴ This meant that members were able to be more outspoken than other people, groups, and organizations, and devote more time to their cause. The cause was not integration for all involved. Some women simply wanted the schools open, and integration was the only means for this without violating federal law and court orders.¹⁵

WEC had achieved its goal within one year of organizing. It successfully organized a campaign to recall segregationist members of the school board and helped have three moderates elected. Most importantly, the schools were reopened in August 1959, and began working towards full integration.¹⁶ WEC continued to work in Little Rock to promote moderate school board member elections and improve public education, but also to aid communities in other cities to organize groups to help them achieve similar goals.

Members of WEC began to discuss the organization's future in the spring of 1963. It had been proposed that the group "[broaden] the base of its operation to make it into a political action group." Different women had different ideas for the group's expansion into politics and this division ultimately led WEC "to concentrate on public education and issues related to it, including the election of candidates dedicated to these principles," and not become more politically active.¹⁷ It was also at this meeting that WEC decided to integrate and allowed African American membership. However, by November 5, 1963, members of WEC voted to disband. It was clear from the spring meeting that there were

¹⁴ Lorraine Gates, "Power from the Pedestal: The Women's Emergency Committee and the Little Rock School Crisis," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 55:1 (Spring 1996): 30, 32-33, 36, 41-42.

¹⁵ Murphy, *Breaking the Silence*, 75-76.

¹⁶ Gates, *Power from the Pedestal*, 50-55; Gordy, *Finding the Lost Year*: 160-161.

¹⁷ Murphy, *Breaking the Silence*, 230-231.

many different views about WEC and its future as an organization. By November, the tension between members had increased, some women had become politically active, some simply did not want to be involved with politics. Membership had fallen as many women had only joined to work toward reopening the schools and so the women voted to dissolve WEC.¹⁸

Their involvement with WEC allowed Murphy and Ledbetter to establish a relationship with the Council on Community Affairs (COCA), a civil rights group created in 1960 by four African American professionals (Dr. Maurice A. Jackson, Dr. William H. Townsend, Dr. Garmin P. Freeman, and Dr. Evangeline Upshur), who sought to unify the local African American community and other civil rights groups to be able to effect change, much like how the Arkansas Public Policy Panel came to structure itself. WEC and COCA worked together to have suitable people elected to the Little Rock School Board.¹⁹ Another civil rights organization with which Ledbetter had contact was the Arkansas Council on Human Relations (ACHR), specifically Ozell Sutton, the assistant director. An interracial civil rights group, the ACHR was established in 1954, after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision led to the reorganization of the state's branch of the Southern Regional Council. The ACHR was a grassroots organization that sought equality for the state's African American population through equal access to facilities and opportunities.²⁰ COCA and the ACHR worked within communities to overcome specific

¹⁸ Ibid., 230-236; National Park Service, "Women's Emergency Committee to Open our Schools," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=716> (last modified 4-25-2011).

¹⁹ John A. Kirk, *Redefining the Color Line: Black Activism in Little Rock, 1940-1970*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 150; Murphy, *Breaking the Silence*, 236.

²⁰ Kirk, *Redefining the Color Line*, 119, 129, 133-135.

inequalities and problems, the same format that the Arkansas Public Policy Project used to address local issues.

Developing PAW

When WEC disbanded, Murphy was not satisfied that enough had been done to “address the problem of race relations directly.”²¹ She envisioned a new organization or group to fulfill Terry’s original hope for WEC: an interracial group that attracted women from different economic strata that addressed more than the immediate issue of school desegregation and looked into deeper social problems. More than just an interracial group, Murphy wanted diversity through women of different races, ethnic groups, and religious backgrounds, to confront the issue of inequality.²² It was not until a chance meeting with Homer Wadsworth from Kansas City that Murphy realized an organization of this type already existed. The group that she created was completely separate from WEC, while many women from WEC became involved with the Panel of American Women, it was not a continuation of the former.

Wadsworth, president of the Kansas City School Board, was curious to talk to Murphy about what she thought caused Little Rock’s desegregation crisis in 1957. It emerged that a volunteer group led by Esther Brown, the Panel of Americans, was working to improve race relations in Kansas City. Wadsworth explained that a panel of diverse people, usually women, held public meetings where they talked about their life experiences and prejudices they had faced.²³ This conversation led Murphy to contact

²¹ Murphy, *Breaking the Silence*, 236-237.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 237-238.

Brown and they arranged for her to visit Little Rock to introduce the Panel of Americans to a group of local civic leaders. Many former members of WEC attended this meeting, including Terry and Ledbetter.

Brown was white, Jewish, well educated, and had played an organizing role in the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case that originated in Topeka, Kansas.²⁴ Brown, at the meeting in Little Rock described how the Panel of Americans in Kansas City functioned. PAW did not seek involvement in politics, rather, its purpose was to inform and educate communities about inequalities women from diverse backgrounds had faced and enable open and honest dialogue between people.

Approaching the Issues

PAW's aim was to have a diverse group of women from different racial and religious backgrounds –white, African American, Japanese American, Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant. Each woman had five minutes to talk about “how prejudice had affected their life and the lives of their family” before a moderator took questions from the

²⁴ Esther Brown, was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1917. She was a Jewish civil rights activist. Brown received degrees from the University of Chicago and Northwestern University. She married Paul Brown in 1943, and they lived in Johnson County, Kansas. It came to Brown's attention in 1948 that conditions at the local African American school were run-down through her housekeeper, Mrs. Swann. Brown inspected the school and indeed found it to be in poor condition while the school board was proposing a bond for a new white school. Brown suggested that the African Americans oppose the bond issue and began organizing them to protest the conditions at the school. Eventually, Brown turned to the NAACP to file a lawsuit to integrate the schools, which they won. Not satisfied, Brown worked with the NAACP to have other school districts integrated across Kansas, but few lawsuits availed. It was Brown's persuasiveness that led to the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, (1954) U.S. Supreme Court case. Following her work with school desegregation, Brown went on to organize the Panel of Americans which sought to persuade people and communities that inequality and injustice was widespread. The Panel of Americans was made up of women from different racial and religious backgrounds who told of their experiences based on their background to an audience. Esther Brown's idea spread to over sixty communities across the U.S. by her death in 1970. For more information see, Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 388-390; “Her Light Will Shine Eternally,” *The Call*, Box 1, Folder 1, PAW Records; Jean Gordon, interview with Megan Dunaway, Little Rock, AR, February 23, 2013.

audience.²⁵ Ideally, Brown advised the group, the panelists would be attractive, personable, intelligent women who could stand the potential ramifications of participating in these presentations and handle the fact that they were discussing controversial issues in front of people who probably disagreed with them.²⁶

PAW, from its inception, wanted to “build acceptability for a desegregated, and hopefully, integrated community,” through the use of “people who are from the community and are acceptable to it.”²⁷ This was based on the premise that only local citizens who understood local conditions were able to change the hearts and minds of other local residents, a strategy that the Arkansas Public Policy Panel uses to this day. PAW worked to create a space for honest, open dialogue with audiences to discuss issues of race, inequality, and prejudice and also to expose communities to people of other races, ethnicities, and faiths.²⁸ It was an opportunity to engage and inform different communities about different ways people had experienced inequality and prejudice.

PAW followed the format of the Kansas City Panel of Americans and recruited women with varied backgrounds. The women were chosen carefully. They “must not have chips on their shoulders, must never become hostile, must be willing to read, write, learn and listen. And they must get accustomed to not bristling at any questions, however barbed.”²⁹ Finding African American women who wanted to participate proved difficult. Murphy invited Gwen Riley, a faculty member at Philander Smith College to participate

²⁵ Murphy, *Breaking the Silence*, 240.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ “The Panel of American Women: A Review. 1963-1975,” Box 1, Folder 1, PAW Records.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “Panel of Women’ Idea Spreads Across the Nation; Originator Tells Why,” Box 1, Folder 1, PAW Records.

and used this connection to recruit other African American women.³⁰ PAW only had one Japanese American panelist in its early years. Murphy had followed a young Japanese American girl walking down the sidewalk into a local laundromat where her mother was doing the family washing, and asked the mother to join PAW.³¹ Slowly, the numbers began to grow, and PAW began preparing for its first panel.³²

PAW's first panel was held at Westover Hills Presbyterian Church in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1963.³³ Westover Hills had recently announced its support for integrated public schools, and several of PAW's members were also members of the church. PAW made over 150 appearances with a combined audience total of 28,000 people in its first eighteen months.³⁴ PAW held presentations between 1963 and 1971 and conducted approximately 100 panels a year.³⁵

PAW's goal was to promote "cultural understanding among various ethnic and religious groups."³⁶ PAW hoped to touch communities on a personal level as opposed to preaching the values of right and wrong by telling personal stories of how discrimination

³⁰ Philander Smith was founded in 1877. It was the first institution west of the Mississippi River to make education available to freed slaves. Philander Smith College is the only United Negro College Fund member institution in Arkansas. Its mission is to provide a quality education for all regardless of race, religion, sex, national origin or ethnic background. For more information see: Philander Smith College, <http://www.philander.edu> (last accessed 4/16/2013).

³¹ Matilda Tuohey, "Little Rock Women's Panel Wages War on Prejudice," *Arkansas Gazette*, December 27, 1964.

³² Prior to the first panel, the women attended several workshops held at Sara Murphy's home. During these workshops the women began to examine their own personal prejudices. While writing their speeches they were given an opportunity to communicate with each other the ways that racial and religious intolerances had affected them. This communication made the members of PAW realize that they all had things in common and needed to work through their own personal prejudices. This provided them with an open forum of communication and for many provided a healing atmosphere. A passion for social justice became the core strength and a common goal among the women. For more information see, Pat Youngdahl, interview with Britany Simmons, Little Rock, AR, February 23, 2013 and Jean Gordon interview.

³³ Jean Gordon interview.

³⁴ Barnes *The Junior League Eleven*, 46-61, 54.

³⁵ Phyllis D. Brandon, "Brownie Williams Ledbetter," *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, September 26, 1999.

³⁶ Barnes, *The Junior League Eleven*, 46-61.

had affected their lives and their families' lives. Each woman had a previously prepared five-minute speech that explained how she had been affected by prejudice and inequality. The stories included where they were educated, how they had come to live in Arkansas, and how they had been affected by prejudice. The stories were intended to make their audiences see the effect of discrimination by attaching the face of a well-educated, refined woman to an instance of inequality.

The presentation of the personal stories was very simple in structure. Each woman was introduced by a moderator, and then began her personal, contextualized story. Barbara Philips, a Jewish panelist, talked about growing up in a loving supportive home and being rejected from a school club due to her religion. Phillip's mother told her that prejudice against Jewish people was a part of life that she had to accept.³⁷ Carol Taylor, a Japanese American panelist, explained that her family came to Arkansas by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) during World War II and the trauma of being uprooted from their home, placed in an internment camp in a new place, and the effect it had on her family.³⁸ Sissy Griffin, a Catholic panelist, spoke about explaining customs and traditions of her faith to her children's non-Catholic friends while at the same time explaining to her children that their friends had simply chosen "to worship God in another church."³⁹ Faustenia Bomar Howard, an African American panelist, recalled a personal experience where she was not allowed to take her children into the public library or use a public restroom.⁴⁰ Jean Gordon, a white panelist explained how her upbringing blinded her to

³⁷ Tuohey, *Little Rock Women's Panel Wages War on Prejudice*.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the inequalities that were so prevalent in society today.⁴¹ A white panelist often followed the African American panelist's presentation, in order to lessen tension in the audience. Stories were placed within the context of current events in order to make them more relatable to audiences.

PAW presentations were not advertised and it never asked for an invitation to present its program. Instead, the group relied on word of mouth and only went where it was invited, a strategy the Arkansas Public Policy Panel use to this day. This gave the members an advantage, allowing them to always be the guest wherever they presented.⁴² These invitations usually came from PTAs, church groups, colleges, and civic organizations across Arkansas.⁴³ Following the request for a PAW visit, the panelists travelled to the requested location and held their panel. A moderator was in charge of sound equipment, introduced the panelists, and opened the floor for questions following the presentations.

Changing Members' Perspectives

It was during these moments that PAW faced its most difficult challenge, people opposed to its mission. Audience members asked why it was not enough for an African American member to feel happy and secure in her community; some did not understand why she would want to leave. Occasionally, the audience remarked that while they appreciated the commentary, still they did not believe in integration. Community members who felt their city was not segregated were shocked to hear the women were

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Pat Youngdahl interview.

⁴³ Ibid.

refused service in restaurants due to the African American member's presence.⁴⁴ Many of the panelists recalled feeling afraid while driving into small Arkansas towns but PAW continued with the goal of creating a place where inequality and prejudice could be discussed and examined.⁴⁵

Members became more comfortable with each other and their differences as PAW grew. They became active in various civic organizations and activities within their religious institutions, as well as education. PAW enabled the women "to establish a basis of trust across religious and racial barriers," which was reflected in the groups they joined and the activities in which they participated.⁴⁶ Many of the panelists became active in community organizations including, Women in Community Service (WICS), the Special Committee on Public Education (SCOPE), Operation Friendship, and the Kindergarten Educational Enrichment Program (KEEP). Panelist Helen Littleton was head of the Democratic Women for Rockefeller Speakers in 1966; Gwen Riley spearheaded a voter education project for African American communities; and Jo Jackson became the Little Rock PTA Council president.

Each trip the women took gave them a "five-dimensional picture of what [needed] to be done in every community."⁴⁷ A Jewish panelist talked about being excluded from a club because of her faith, and other members attempted to eliminate such exclusionary policies.⁴⁸ As the women created deeper and more meaningful relationships with each

⁴⁴ Shirley Strauss, interview with Sarah Riva, Little Rock, AR, April 2, 2013.

⁴⁵ Vince Insalaco, *Fortieth Anniversary Raw Footage*, DVD, Arkansas Public Policy Panel, (Little Rock, AR, 1993).

⁴⁶ Sara Murphy, "Women Panelists Recall Experiences of Last 4 Years," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 7, 1967.

⁴⁷ Murphy, *Women Panelists Recall Experiences of Last 4 Years*.

⁴⁸ PAW was thrown head to head with another local organization of women, the Little Rock Junior League. During this time the Junior League's membership consisted of white protestant women. The women of

other, they began to see problems in their own communities. Their trust of each other allowed the women “to reach beyond racial and religious barriers.”⁴⁹ PAW provided its members with “an unusual opportunity for added insight and understanding.”⁵⁰ This opportunity perpetuated a desire for change among the women.

Altering Focus

PAW realized by the late 1960s that its format was not as provocative as it had been at its start. Schools and public places were beginning to integrate and issues were shifting from integration to behavior within an integrated space. “As more people in the community were crossing racial lines and were faced with new relationships at their children’s schools, on their jobs, and sometimes in their neighborhoods, more practical concerns began to arise, old attitudes, and sometimes new hostilities came to the fore.”⁵¹

PAW understood the importance of providing communities with a place for open and meaningful discussions, but the format needed to change. It abandoned the moderator position and removed the autobiographical content of the speeches in order to more

PAW had begun questioning the ethnic intolerances that resided within their own communities, and it became clear to the women that the Junior League was operating under a segregationist agenda. A group of women led by Ledbetter began campaigning for the admittance of a local Jewish woman who met all qualifications for becoming a member of the League (JL55), but she was three times refused. Ledbetter became the first member of the Junior League to submit a formal resignation in 1967. The next year, ten more members resigned. “Each of those who left the Little Rock Junior League believed that she was continuing the work for social justice that began with the Central High School crisis.” See: Barnes, *The Junior League Eleven*.

⁴⁹ Murphy, *Women Panelists Recall Experiences of Last 4 Years*.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ “The Panel of American Women: A Review. 1963-1975,” PAW Records.

effectively approach these new issues. Instead of five panelists, there were four. These four panelists had a united goal to spend less time talking about their own experiences and focused instead on stimulating audience interaction.⁵²

PAW held its first public school workshop at Pulaski Heights Junior High in 1969. Fear of a racial incident occurring in the public school system prevented many parents, teachers, and students, (both African American and white), from discussing racial and religious inequalities. “The schools themselves became the important place in which to work toward changing racial attitudes.”⁵³ PAW’s format changed considerably in order to accommodate the changing attitudes and community issues, and the panelists required more training in order to work with school children. PAW researched funding options and sought a more structured organizational model.

When it began, PAW did not have an official source for funding. It had no sponsorships or foundation support. Often, Ledbetter drove the panelists to meetings in her Volkswagen van.⁵⁴ Several of the women’s husbands purchased the PA system that was used for the presentations.⁵⁵ Gas, food, and lodging were paid out of the panelist’s own pockets.⁵⁶ As its goals began to change, PAW needed to secure funding for training and organizational costs. This need for assistance led the organization to incorporate in 1971 and it became eligible for federal aid. This marked the transition from PAW to the Arkansas Public Policy Panel.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Insaulesco, *Fortieth Anniversary Raw Footage*.

⁵⁵ Tuohey, *Little Rock Women’s Panel Wages War on Prejudice*.

⁵⁶ “Panel of Women’ Idea Spreads Across the Nation; Originator Tells Why,” PAW Records.

PAW grew out of an increased awareness of the prevalence of inequality due to segregation caused by the 1957 Central High School Crisis. Its goal was to provide communities with an open and safe atmosphere where citizens could discuss and learn about the effect of racial and religious inequality. The approach to the issue of inequality changed as more and more communities began to integrate, and PAW found itself needing increased funding that would require incorporation. Times were changing for PAW, but the basic foundation of what would eventually become the Arkansas Public Policy Panel was established, and battling inequality was its core.

Panel of American Women Introduces School Based Programs

PAW modified itself and its work to adapt with the changing times at the beginning of the 1970s. One modification to PAW was incorporation and recognition by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.⁵⁷ Incorporation allowed the organization to hire a small staff that worked and developed many programs through the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) and the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA). The programs PAW developed during the 1970s mainly focused on empowering students to fight religious, racial, and ethnic discrimination. The programs also were designed to provide teachers with more general human relations training. These initiatives were essential in easing tension caused by school integration and court-ordered busing that had been implemented in 1971 to achieve racial balance.⁵⁸ The newly incorporated PAW chose to work through schools as its primary strategy to implement programs that focused on equality.

Reorganizing After Incorporation

The American perspective on equality in schools was diverse. Times and views were changing, and in the 1970s PAW worked with these changes to create a common thread of equality for all. Founding member Sara Murphy moved on to serve as vice-president of the national Panel of American Women in 1971 and eventually vice-chairperson of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. Brownie Ledbetter

⁵⁷ "Organizational History Materials," Box 1, Folder 1, PAW Records.

⁵⁸ Laura A. Miller, "Panel of American Women," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2291> (last modified 10-12-2011).

continued working with PAW to deal with inequality in schools.⁵⁹ Ledbetter became the executive director of the Little Rock PAW, and with the hiring of new staff and a focus on important issues, the organization continued to expand.⁶⁰ Activities and ideas began to expand as PAW grew. Beginning in 1971, PAW started applying for and receiving grants from ESAA to help improve its efforts for equality within public schools.⁶¹ ESAA provided grants to non-profit organizations “to support school desegregation or reduce minority group isolation.”⁶² These activities and ideas of equality not only found a place in school integration programs and serving the public schools, but also stimulated the formation of coalitions that worked for economic justice.⁶³

The new direction and expansion led PAW’s planning committee to set goals for members in 1972. Three goals were established and specific objectives for attainment were set for each. The first goal was focused on the individual members of PAW. It was designed to allow these members to know and to trust each other. It was important for a group of such diverse women to bond to allow the group to operate as one.⁶⁴ PAW set a deadline of September 1, 1972, for fifty percent of the members to have met and participated in different group encounter sessions. These sessions included groups of

⁵⁹ Finding Aid, *Sara Alderman Murphy Papers*.

⁶⁰ “Organizational History Materials,” PAW Records.

⁶¹ “Emergency School Aid Act Grant Application February 21, 1978,” Box 1, File 18, PAW Records.

⁶² S. Crocker, Peter W. Sperlich, and L.P. Oliver, “An Evaluation of the Emergency School Aid Act Nonprofit Organization Program, Vol. II, A Description of Local Program Operations,” Rand Corporation, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R2312z2.html>. (last accessed 4/21/13).

⁶³ Stephanie Bayless, “Arkansas Public Policy Panel,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2576> (last modified 1-2-2010).

⁶⁴ Jan Peterson, interview with Rachel Jeffries via Skype, March 10, 2013.

eight members who spent at least fifteen hours together. Another deadline was set for January 1, 1973, for PAW members and their families. They were to have participated in many different social events that included a diverse population.⁶⁵

The second goal focused on people in the educational system. The efforts of PAW in this regard were to assist people in the educational system to gain trust and understanding. PAW set a deadline of October 15, 1972, to have a task force meet with three different representative groups in the educational system. The task force was made up of different members from PAW. Members were to meet and define the areas of need in human relations within three target areas in Little Rock schools. The task force had compiled and analyzed data developing two programs dealing with the defined needs by December 15, 1972. The programs were accomplished and evaluated by June 1, 1973, and all necessary training was provided.⁶⁶

The final goal focused on different groups with which PAW worked. The purpose was to assist non-PAW groups in openly exploring ideas and feelings that dealt with racial and religious differences. PAW wanted to help the various groups achieve individual and community change. A final deadline of December 15, 1972, was set to achieve this effort. Fifty percent of members were to develop communication skills that helped them work with groups. Members encouraged different groups to identify major areas of concern within their communities after each presentation. The purpose was to identify areas where change was needed, and help that particular group identify its next steps, much like the strategic planning of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel today. PAW provided follow-up visits when necessary, in order to intensify the established target

⁶⁵ "Board Minutes and Treasures' Reports 1972-1982." Box 1, Folder 2, PAW Records.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

groups' commitment.⁶⁷ PAW worked hard to meet all its goals, and this was key to the organization's survival throughout these years, leading to its transformation into the Arkansas Public Policy Panel.

Reorganization was once again necessary by 1973, because PAW's program expanded beyond the capacity of its initial structure. Many of the members and volunteers began working part-time or full-time for the organization as a result. The new positions were paid from a HEW grant under ESAA, which was received due to PAW's involvement with schools. Seven staff members were hired, including Ledbetter as the organization's executive director.⁶⁸ The goals of PAW at this time were to "devise, develop, and promote programs of youth and adult education to counteract prejudice and discrimination based on racial, religious, nationality, or ethnic group membership, and to stimulate individuals in local community groups to constructive and democratic attitudes towards problems of intergroup relations."⁶⁹

Financing became an essential aspect for PAW as it sent members into classrooms. This required training and supporting materials. It received funding from many different sources: grants, personal contributions, volunteer contributions, donor contributions, and rent.⁷⁰ PAW applied for grants every year. A volunteer board continued

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ "Organizational History Materials," PAW Records.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Beth Ardapple, interview with Leah Berry, Little Rock, Arkansas, February 21, 2013.

its involvement and handled the publicity, fundraising, and grants.⁷¹ PAW received federal grants during the 1970s to help support the Little Rock School District's (LRSD) endeavor to bring equality to schools.⁷²

PAW received grants from HEW through ESAA and Emergency School Aid Program (ESAP). The U.S. Department of Education, the Presbyterian Church, Church and Society Fund, the Social Action Committee of the Arkansas Christian, the Southern Education Fund, and Single Parent Vocational Fund also provided funds. Much of this funding was received to address inequality issues in public schools.⁷³

Included in these grants was one for \$98,000 through ESAA to assist in allowing teams of white and African American people to take their programs into certain sixth grade classes within LRSD.⁷⁴ The Classroom Community Council received another grant for \$85,000. This was a coalition of three non-profit organizations: PAW, which was the administrative agency, the Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association (CTA), and the Design Cooperative of Arkansas, Inc.⁷⁵ An additional grant for \$95,000 fostered PAW's work in LRSD providing classroom activities, in-service courses, workshops, newsletters, and human relations resources.⁷⁶

Creating Programs and Coalitions

Federal funding was made available after Congress and the White House reached an agreement during Richard Nixon's presidency to create a program under ESAA in 1972. "The Emergency School Aid Act provided funds for training teachers to deal with

⁷¹ "Organizational History Materials," PAW Records.

⁷² A Brief History of the Panel, Arkansas Public Policy Panel Unprocessed Collection, UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture, Little Rock, Arkansas (hereafter Unprocessed Panel Papers).

⁷³ "Panel of American Women, Inc." Box 1, Files 1,11,17,18,19. PAW Records.

⁷⁴ "Organizational History Materials," PAW Papers.

⁷⁵ "Emergency School Aid Act Grant Application June 1,1971." Box 1, File 17, Paw Records.

⁷⁶ "Emergency School Aid Act Grant Application February 21, 1978," PAW Records.

diverse classes, to develop curricula, and to work on improved race relations among students.”⁷⁷ This funding base enabled PAW to develop and present multicultural curricula within LRSD.

PAW helped in classrooms, provided in-service courses for administration and teachers, and initiated meetings for parents and civic groups.⁷⁸ Ledbetter, as executive director of PAW, placed an emphasis on education and equality; therefore, PAW focused most of its efforts on education and equality through its programs in the 1970s. Included in these school-based programs were the Green Circle, work with the Little Rock CTA, work with the Classroom Community Council, the Single Parents program, and the Free to Be You and Me program.

One national program with which PAW worked closely was the Green Circle. The Green Circle was created in Philadelphia in 1957 by a social worker who participated on a race relations committee.⁷⁹ A non-profit organization described as “a circle of love,” the Green Circle helped children gain good human relations skills.⁸⁰ The purpose of the program was to stimulate and reinforce positive social attitudes in children so that they were able to learn to live together at their highest potential in a world of diversity.⁸¹

PAW used the Green Circle to help counteract the harm to children caused by prejudice. The concept of the Green Circle was introduced by using a flannel-board in the shape of a circle. The flannel-board circle started with the individual and showed continuous growth as it included family, friends, and people in the community, nation,

⁷⁷ Gary Orfield, “Schools More Separate: Consequences of a Decade of Resegregation,” *The Civil Rights Project* (July 2001): 4.

⁷⁸ A Brief History of the Panel, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

⁷⁹ Charles Farrell, “Green Circle Encourages Acceptance,” *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* (from *Wilmington New Journal*), December 1980.

⁸⁰ “Green Circle,” Box 3, File 9, Paw Records.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

and world. The main idea was "to show inclusion of people who were different."⁸² The Green Circle was used as a demonstration with the children as participants.⁸³

The major emphasis of this program was placed on acceptance, which was contrasted with rejection because of differences. The differences included size, disability, wealth, nationality, race, religion, and more. PAW used human relations kits that were incorporated from the program that included games, plays, puppet shows, handicrafts, stories, songs, and other visual aids. These were primarily used as follow-up materials for the classroom. The program had a stimulating aspect that prompted children to come to the conclusion that the Green Circle was a circle of love.⁸⁴ Everyone should have respect and love for others in the world. This idea was used by PAW initially in elementary schools, and later in junior high schools, to achieve its goals that focused on education and equality.⁸⁵

PAW reinforced its work in LRSD when it began using this program in 1971. The Green Circle program was funded by a grant from ESAA. Because of state law, some funds from ESAA were required to be distributed to community groups like PAW. This helped PAW work in LRSD to introduce the Green Circle Program as a means to smooth the desegregation process.⁸⁶ Together, PAW and LRSD continued using this program throughout the 1970s. It was a much needed program because racial and other minority group attitudes were reflected within the lives of the children as well as the children's ideas, attitudes, and behavior throughout their early years of schooling.⁸⁷

⁸² Joyce Williams, interview with Britany Simmons, March 1, 2013.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Stella Capek, *A History of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel*, (unpublished manuscript).

⁸⁶ "Green Circle," Box 3, File 9, Paw Records.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Ledbetter and PAW went on to create another program in partnership with CTA. PAW worked on and helped design a course on multiculturalism. The course provided in-service training for teachers on human relations topics; however, PAW went on to design structured classroom presentations that reached students as well. Four interracial teams were used to present PAW's program in the different public school classrooms.⁸⁸

Its work with CTA enabled PAW to continue its work in the schools. The two groups jointly held many professional development courses for teachers. Different workshops were put into place to help increase interaction between white and African American teachers. PAW and CTA were concerned about the lines not only between races, but also between academic levels, gender, religious groups, income levels, and more. Both groups wanted to help teachers structure classrooms to reach students across these lines.⁸⁹

PAW, CTA, and the Design Cooperative of Arkansas worked through the Classroom Community Council in cooperation with LRSD to support and aid teachers, students, and parents in the desegregation process.⁹⁰ The Classroom Community Council was concerned about stereotyping in all forms that avert individuals from accomplishing what they were fully capable of doing. Its programs included three activities to deal with this problem. The first activity was to provide classroom presentations for students to persuade them to deal with their personal and physical differences in productive ways. The next activity was to provide in-service courses for teachers each semester to practice

⁸⁸ Stella Capek, *A History of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel*, (unpublished manuscript).

⁸⁹ "Professional Skills Development Course Correspondence, 1977-1980," Box 1, File 8, Paw Records.

⁹⁰ "Emergency School Aid Act Grant Application June 1, 1977," PAW Records.

qualified valuable skills. The last activity was to provide opportunities for parents to come together in meetings in order to support their children in their different school circumstances.⁹¹

The Classroom Community Council had four important objectives. Objective one was to see a major increase in the positive reception of differences in students, racially and culturally. The second objective was to have different school teachers complete forty-five hours of professional development by the end of one program year. Professional development was designed to improve a teachers' understanding and their skills in managing differing demands placed on them by culturally diverse students. Objective three was to have different school administrators complete forty-five hours of human relations skills in school management. The fourth objective was designed to have staff and teachers participate in multiple workshops focused on increased interaction and cooperation among faculty and staff of different schools. The results of these interactions was to improve skills in organizing heterogeneous classrooms, individualizing instruction, and utilizing students as resources in the learning process in order to amplify communication and collaboration among students across minority and non-minority lines.⁹²

The Classroom Community Council was a successful program for PAW. It helped students understand definitions of prejudice, how it is formed, and how it influenced peoples' actions. According to Ledbetter, "the curriculum is developed incrementally as the teachers, students, and classroom teachers evaluate the classes each session.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

Following the sessions the staff tabulates the evaluations and plans specific activities to lead a given group into further trust-building and community living within the school classroom.”⁹³

PAW also established another program to help reach its major goal of equality. This program was to help single parents pursue education.⁹⁴ PAW was interested in trying to help people “mainstream,” so it decided to help prepare single parents, both men and women, for different “careers not jobs.”⁹⁵ PAW provided personal assessments that identified individual strengths of single parents.⁹⁶ PAW then created a scholarship fund to aid in single parents in attaining an education for their chosen careers.⁹⁷

PAW established a program to continue its work with children and their perceptions of inequality. It was called the Free to Be You and Me program. This consisted of a performance directed by David Fitzhugh and performed by the Tell-a-Tale Troupe of the Arkansas Arts Center. Brownie Ledbetter, Donita Hudspeth, Bobbie James, Deborah Cooper, Patty Kelly, Rosa Ford, Susie Steinnes, and Tina Turner worked to become familiar with racist and sexist behavior and categorize specific examples of each. The focus of the program was teaching children how to be themselves, how to treat others, and not to judge others.⁹⁸

⁹³ “Panel Promotes Better Understanding,” *Focus*, L.R. Public School District, 1:3 (Nov. 5, 1979): 2.

⁹⁴ “Organizational History Materials,” PAW Records.

⁹⁵ Freeman McKindra, interview with Leah Berry. Little Rock, Arkansas, February 28, 2013.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ “Organizational History Materials,” PAW Records.

⁹⁸ Arkansas Public Policy Panel. Unprocessed Panel Papers.

Facing Challenges

Throughout the 1970s, PAW faced different challenges that eventually turned into successes. One of these challenges for PAW involved the Athletes in Action Program. Dale Bumpers, governor of Arkansas, declared March 3-10, 1974, as Athletes in Action Week. PAW objected to this program because it considered Athletes in Action to be an “arm of the Campus Crusades for Christ Movement and as such ... a fundamentalist evangelical religious thing whose efforts take the form of testimonials in the public schools.”⁹⁹ PAW believed this was against the liberties given to Americans by the First Amendment. It believed that the program was offensive to people who did not want their children to be evangelized during school. PAW’s position of opposition was based on the principle of freedom from religious imposition.¹⁰⁰

The Athletes in Action Program held assemblies for students to attend; because the assemblies were optional, the program organizers felt they were abiding by the law. PAW concluded that just because the assemblies were optional did not mean that the program was following the law. The U.S. Supreme Court had previously ruled that in-school optional worship and devotional sessions did not consent to freedom. The program was canceled by March 1974 after all the objections.¹⁰¹ PAW had accomplished what it set out to do.

Another challenge PAW continuously faced and tried to overcome was stereotyping in schools. As Ledbetter's feminist views developed, PAW submitted a proposal for a project on Sex Role Stereotyping to the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

⁹⁹ Panel of American Women, Inc., “Newsletters,” Box 1, File 7, PAW Records.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

(WRF) in 1977, but it was not funded.¹⁰² However, PAW did not give up on the program. The next year, PAW applied for and received an ESAA grant that provided funding to approach the issue in schools. It used a film called *Eye of the Storm* to build on activities that it had already put in place to reexamine stereotyping.¹⁰³ It provided audio and visual experiences that observed stereotyping and members led discussions of processes and consequences of stereotyping.¹⁰⁴ PAW defined stereotyping, and helped students discover how powerful and painful it could be. Role playing and group exercises were activities used to aid in the discovery process.¹⁰⁵

PAW also addressed the issue of racial imbalance in LRSD among the leadership and employees. LRSD rarely hired women or African Americans for jobs. PAW suggested in 1978 that LRSD write and carry out an affirmative action plan in order to correct the problem.¹⁰⁶ The superintendent of LRSD at this time was Winston Simpson. He wanted to hear recommendations, and he even wrote to PAW saying, “PAW has been a major contributing force to LRSD’s efforts to successfully establish and maintain a viable desegregated school system over the past [fifteen] years.”¹⁰⁷ He thanked Ledbetter for her support over the years, and he was grateful that the organization was going to be working in the school system again in the 1978-1979 academic year.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² “Board Minutes and Treasures’ Reports 1972-1982,” PAW Records.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ “Panel promotes better understanding,” *Focus*, 2.

¹⁰⁶ William Green, “Racial Imbalance Still Exists, Panel Tells School Board,” *Arkansas Gazette*, January 27, 1978.

¹⁰⁷ “Emergency School Aid Act Grant Application February 21, 1978,” PAW Records.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

An additional challenge that turned into a success for PAW dealt with the subject of Arkansas history. This challenge resulted in the creation of a PAW project, the History Book Project, in 1979. PAW opposed the classroom use of a brochure published in 1969 and written by state historian John L. Ferguson called *150 Questions and Answers About Arkansas History*.¹⁰⁹

PAW brought the brochure to the attention of a local coalition on human rights. The coalition believed the brochure contained racist and inaccurate information pertaining to the reconstruction period of Arkansas history because certain aspects had been omitted. PAW looked into other texts related to Arkansas history that were being used in the public school system. The only textbook in use was also by John L. Ferguson entitled *Historic Arkansas*. This book was the original source for most of the brochure. The book's omissions of Arkansas history were the cause for the accusations that it presented a racist interpretation of the past.¹¹⁰

Historic Arkansas was authorized by the Arkansas State Legislature in 1965.¹¹¹ The book's partial depiction of history, written through southern white stereotypes, was challenged by PAW. Ledbetter considered the book biased and unacceptable for students of Arkansas history.¹¹² PAW settled the issue when it decided to meet with Dr. Leroy Williams who worked at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) as a history professor. Members of PAW and Dr. Williams made the decision to create a book of primary documents compiled from four periods of Arkansas history and written by four

¹⁰⁹ "Arkansas History Textbook Project, 1979," Box 1, File 10, Paw Records.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

different professors with varying perspectives. A teaching aid also was developed for each section.¹¹³ This successful project helped carry out PAW's goal of eliminating inaccurate and biased historical interpretations.

Expanding Outlook

Ledbetter decided to take a break from the educational scene in 1976 and turn her energies to helping her husband Cal Ledbetter with his campaign for Democratic Candidate for the Second Congressional District. PAW board accepted her leave and made this possible.¹¹⁴ Ledbetter organized a group of women who were married to legislators during Cal Ledbetter's 1976 campaign.¹¹⁵ The women wrote and mimeographed records every week in order to inform the general public on different legislative activities.¹¹⁶

Politics was not new to Ledbetter. She was placed on the State Democratic Central Committee from 1968 to 1974. She served on the National Women's Political Caucus as the first Political Action Chair in 1973. She later went on to become the founding member of the Arkansas Women's Political Caucus. She was also the coordinator of the Affirmative Action Committee for the State Democratic Party in 1973 and 1974.¹¹⁷

Ledbetter's political work outside of PAW was controversial. She was accused by Republican Bob Scott of violating the Hatch Act. The Hatch Act prohibited people who were on government payroll from being involved in political activities. The accusation of this violation was that Ledbetter was involved with political issues, but she was also the

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ "Board Minutes and Treasures' Reports 1972-1982," PAW Records.

¹¹⁵ Stephanie Bayless, *Mary Brown "Brownie" Williams Ledbetter*.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

executive director of PAW, which had received grants from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. “It would appear Mrs. Ledbetter is openly violating the Hatch Act and we will appreciate your taking the appropriate steps to either remove Mrs. Ledbetter or obtain compliance by asking her to refrain from active participation in political activities.”¹¹⁸

Ledbetter had no intention of resigning from political activity or from PAW. She did not use her office at PAW for any political activities and so she did not feel that she was in violation of the Hatch Act. The U.S. Health, Education, and Welfare Department concluded that Ledbetter was not in violation of the Hatch Act; her political activity was not prohibited by the Act, and she was only a part-time employee of PAW at the time.¹¹⁹ Ultimately, this accusation did not affect Ledbetter and her work with PAW.

The idea for a name change gained momentum at the beginning of 1980. It was discussed in February and by March that year PAW became the Little Rock Panel, Inc. (LRP). The name change was much overdue because the original name perpetuated a common misconception. The organization included both men and women—not just women. Both men and women were actively involved in PAW’s work in the school system, and both continued working with the organization in the years to come.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ “The Hatch Act Question,” Box 1, File 13, PAW Records.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ “Board Minutes and Treasures’ Reports 1972-1982,” PAW Records.

LRP lost funding for school-based programs when ESAA ended under President Reagan's budget.¹²¹ This situation caused the original work of the organization to come to a halt, and a new atmosphere for work was created in the 1980s. The LRP shifted focus from the schools, to the school boards, and then to policy research. The organization and its work expanded in the upcoming decade and PAW eventually became what it is known as today, the Arkansas Public Policy Panel.

¹²¹ Orfield, *Schools More Separate*, 13.

Little Rock Panel takes on Tax Reform

The Panel of American Women (PAW) became the Little Rock Panel, Inc. (LRP) in 1980, with the focus of promoting citizen participation in the political process. The reason for the name change was that some members of PAW felt there was a misconception in the community about the organization's function because the name was limited to women. Both men and women were working to reduce stereotypes by participating in programs that challenged equality issues in schools.¹²²

Historically, PAW tackled equality issues in the community through small, focused demonstrations and programs. Many of these programs were funded with Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) grants. Changes in the federal guidelines of ESAA funding in 1980 made it impossible for organizations like LRP to receive grant money. Additionally, new and concerned leadership of the public schools influenced the LRP to change its approach and increase its impact.¹²³

LRP maintained a low profile during 1981 and 1982 as reflected in financial records.¹²⁴ Ledbetter and other members of LRP independently focused on school board elections during this time. The election of B.G. Williams to the Little Rock School Board for example, drew several members' attention.¹²⁵ While the campaign was not part of LRP in an official capacity, the success of this format of political activism transformed

¹²² "Minutes from the Little Rock Panel, Inc., February 20, 1980," Box 1, Folder 2, PAW Records.

¹²³ "Board Report from the Little Rock Panel, Inc., June 9, 1980," Box 1, Folder 2, PAW Records.

¹²⁴ "Financial Report of the Little Rock Panel, Inc.," Box 1, Folder 5, PAW Records.

¹²⁵ "School Board election materials," Box 1, Folder 12, PAW Records.

LRP when it regained funding. The election victory opened opportunities for LRP to battle inequalities by becoming more involved in the political process to address inequalities not only in schools, but also economic.

Changing Economic Climate

The U.S. underwent major adjustments to the tax system during the 1980s. The tax system had become complicated with varying levels of tax rates, deductions, and exemptions. More political focus was spent on how to best utilize the tax system as major corporations, large businesses, and government continued to grow and expand.¹²⁶

The 1980 election set the stage for a Republican-inspired tax policy in 1981. The economic recession in the 1970s led Republicans to use macroeconomic principles to stimulate the economy and reduce the federal deficit. The Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 (ERTA) installed an across-the-board decrease in federal income tax rates, provided tax incentives for small businesses, lowered estate taxes, and created other similar tax cuts. The goal of ERTA was to spur economic growth; instead these changes have been estimated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to have cost the U.S. Treasury \$750 billion between 1981 and 1986.¹²⁷

The nation engaged in an extensive debate over needed tax reform between 1984 and 1986. The focus on the debate centered almost entirely on the tax base and the lower rates that might be possible if the base was expanded. This effort largely put aside the

¹²⁶ Eugene C. Steuerle, "Tax Reform, Federal," *NTA Encyclopedia of Taxation and Tax Policy*, Tax Policy Center, www.taxpolicycenter.org, (last accessed February 7, 2013).

¹²⁷ Charles H. Stewart III, "The Politics of Tax Reform of the 1980s," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: January 1991).

issues of total revenues and short term growth incentives and focused on a revenue neutral discussion. A large number of deductions, exclusions, and credits were either consolidated or completely eliminated.¹²⁸

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA) broadened the income tax base and reduced tax brackets from fourteen to five. The TRA was the most comprehensive reform of this type ever achieved for the income tax with the intention of stimulating the economy and reducing the federal deficit.¹²⁹ Opponents of the TRA claimed that the measure placed the tax burden on lower economic tax brackets, while allowing wealthier Americans to expand their wealth. In 1984, the top one percent of income earners received 8.4 percent of national income; that rate increased to 13.5 percent by 1989.¹³⁰

National tax reform and budget cuts left Arkansas dealing with an economic shortfall. The Arkansas Supreme Court, in 1983, ruled the procedure for financing public schools was unconstitutional because it provided unequal resources for school districts. Subsequently, Arkansas passed a one-cent sales tax increase to raise \$184 million to pay for new school standards. The measure did not raise enough to cover expenses and the state continued to struggle with the budget deficit and faced program cuts that targeted schools.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Steuerle, *Tax reform, federal*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ John Brummett, "Confusion Over '83 Sales Tax Rise is Tribute to Clinton's Political Savvy," *Arkansas Gazette*, March 8, 1983.

Shifting from Education to Public Policy

LRP promoted youth and adult education programs that combated prejudice and discrimination by bringing together community groups to work for a common cause. LRP operated “exclusively for charitable, scientific, literary, or educational purposes.”¹³² The 1980s saw LRP participate in school-based coalitions that worked on issues related to school desegregation, work on the Arkansas History Reader textbook, organize and raise funds for an educational conference on the Southern Tenant Farmers Union that resulted in a videotaped oral history, and develop and raised funds for a Single Parent Scholarship Fund.¹³³ LRP, by 1983, made its shift to working with public policy. The establishment of the Arkansas Fairness Council (AFC) created a formal, statewide coalition to lobby at the legislature. In partnership with LRP, AFC became the policy fighting arm.

Changing from PAW to LRP, the organization reestablished its goals and internal structure. LRP bylaws stated that the Board of Directors for the organization consisted of twenty members who served terms of three years.¹³⁴ The Board of Directors met yearly in May to elect directors and conduct other orders of business.¹³⁵ LRP employed ten staff members in 1980, with Ledbetter serving as director.¹³⁶ LRP conducted business at 2200 S. Main Street and then moved to the Hall Building at 209 West Capitol in 1982.¹³⁷ LRP moved into the Boyle Building located at 103 West Capitol Avenue in 1987.¹³⁸ LRP

¹³² The Little Rock Panel, Inc. Administrators for the Arkansas Public Policy Project, 1982, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ “Little Rock Panel, Inc. by-laws,” Box 4, Folder 3, Brownie Ledbetter Collection, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Little Rock (hereafter Brownie Ledbetter Collection).

¹³⁶ “Minutes from the Little Rock Panel, Inc., February 20, 1980,” Box 1, Folder2, PAW Records.

¹³⁷ “Agenda from the Little Rock Panel, Inc., December 7, 1982,” Box 1, Folder 2, PAW Records.

¹³⁸ Celestine Wesley, interview with Rachel Jeffries, Little Rock, Arkansas, March 15, 2013.

shared space within the Boyle Building with another group in Arkansas with which Ledbetter was involved, the Arkansas Career Resources (ACR). ACR was a private, non-profit organization whose goal was “to develop new programs that will increase your opportunities for independence from public assistance.”¹³⁹

LRP had been primarily funded by ESAA grants for the previous nine years. When federal guidelines for this source changed in 1980, LRP halted operations until funding could be achieved. Ledbetter reported that she was pursuing funding options with UALR, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF), fundraisers, and other federal funding sources that would be available in 1981. All paid staff were furloughed, but were “eager to come back if funding [worked] out.”¹⁴⁰

Most programs and projects that originated with PAW ceased operations with the exception of work toward publication of the Arkansas History Reader. Leadership in the public schools had changed to the disfavor of LRP. Ledbetter and other Board members of LRP found it imperative that the organization change its approach and increase its impact.¹⁴¹ Changes in the national and state climate also fostered a transition for LRP.

The shift toward public policy development directed the work of LRP throughout the 1980s. Arkansas passed a sales tax in 1983, to comply with new school funding allocation standards brought down by the Arkansas Supreme Court. The tax did not cover funding needed for Arkansas schools and additional taxes were proposed to cover the shortfall.¹⁴² Tax reform legislation of the 1980s broadened the tax base, therefore the

¹³⁹ “Arkansas Career Resources,” Box 3, file 2, Brownie Ledbetter Collection.

¹⁴⁰ “Board Report from the Little Rock Panel, Inc., June 9, 1980,” Box 1, Folder 2, PAW Records.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Brummett, *Confusion Over '83 Sales Tax Rise is Tribute to Clinton's Political Savvy*.

majority of potential tax revenues for Arkansas schools were to be paid by the poorest Arkansans. LRP supported additional revenue toward education, but did not support the unequal fiscal burden put on the lowest economic classes. The challenge of equal funding responsibility for education took LRP out of classrooms and into legislative policy and community group organizing.

Establishing Statewide Coalition

The goal of LRP was to bring organizations throughout the state together in order to create a unified group to help succeed in its goal of helping more Arkansans play a larger role in the political process. It created an organization known as the Arkansas Fairness Council (AFC) in an effort to achieve that goal. AFC worked on a variety of issues that were important to the groups affiliated with them. While LRP was a 501(c)(3), AFC was a nonprofit able to be involved in political activity. AFC “was more overtly [a] political group” that allowed Ledbetter and others to become involved in endorsing candidates and legislative positions.¹⁴³ AFC lobbied the legislature on many equality issues, but much of its focus related to tax reform throughout the late 1980s.

AFC was created as the public policy and lobbying arm of the LRP in 1983. AFC focused on the economic situation of Arkansans in regards to energy costs and taxes. It was an organization that was comprised of community and statewide grassroots organizations. Member groups of AFC included the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), Arkansas Black Caucus, Arkansas Community Organization for Reform Now (ACORN), Arkansas Women’s Political

¹⁴³ Jim Lynch, interview with J.D. Gatlin, Little Rock, Arkansas, March 12, 2013.

Caucus, Arkansas Chapter of NAACP, and others.¹⁴⁴ Together, these groups represented and advocated for citizens based on issues agreed upon by representatives from the various organizations. The structure of AFC included a President, Vice President, Secretary, and a Treasurer along with four officers selected from the directors by majority vote.¹⁴⁵

AFC was involved in a variety of issues throughout the 1980s. Tax reform was the major issue taken on by AFC. It fought against the sales taxes on groceries, energy, and exemptions of the two percent state sales tax on certain items. AFC was in favor of passing legislation to increase the majority vote in the legislature to sixty percent in order to add items to the exempt list or raise individual income tax. The tax issue in Arkansas was seen as an important equality issue because it often placed an unequal percentage of the tax burden on lower economic groups. The sales tax added to the price of necessities, which impacted individuals and families with limited income.

LRP and AFC needed individuals and organizations to become politically active and support the agenda in order to effectively create policy change. Because of the complexity of the tax code, LRP needed to gather statistics and research related to tax revenues and evaluate its effectiveness in Arkansas.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Arkansas Public Policy Project Proposal, Arkansas Community Organization for Reform Now became Association of Community Organization for Reform Now in 1975 after expanding into surrounding states. Richard S. Drake, "Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=4797> (last modified 10/17/2012).

¹⁴⁵ "Arkansas Fairness Council Bylaws," Box 4, Folder 3, Brownie Ledbetter Collection.

¹⁴⁶ "The Public Policy Forum, February 1986," Box 1, Folder 9, PAW Records.



Panel of American Women members with their husbands, 1960's.



Brownie Ledbetter meeting with a group of students.



Brownie Ledbetter with activist and feminist Bella Abzug.



A "Barefoot and Pregnant" skit satirized legislators trying to exclude women from government.



Arkansas Fairness Council rallying for fair taxes at Capitol.



Brownie leading a workshop for mothers on welfare in the 1980's.



Panel rallying at the Capitol in 1997 before the CFC was formed.



The Panel retreat in 1997 to gear up for the first Citizens First Congress in 1998.



Brownie Ledbetter meeting with the CFC Environmental Caucus in 1998.



Brownie Ledbetter passing the sword to Bill Kopsky at her retirement party in 1998.



Panel staff in 1999.



Panel of American Women members' reunion circa 2001.



2012 staff members of the Panel and Arkansas Citizens First Congress



Bill Kopsky leads a panel discussion at the National Opportunity to Learn Conference in Washington, DC.

Conducting Research

LRP created the Arkansas Public Policy Project (Project) in 1985 with the goal of increasing knowledge about public policy processes and increasing public activity in order to supplement the work of AFC. The Project worked as the research arm of the organization by conducting studies on issues such as the tax code and education; AFC worked as the action arm by lobbying the legislature on public policy issues; and LRP worked as the information arm by sending out information and providing education to the public. The Project worked with AFC and LRP by going out into the communities of Arkansas in order to better understand the needs and views of citizens. While working to connect the goals and programs of AFC and LRP, the Project conducted research to further the aims of both organizations.¹⁴⁷

The Project was created in August 1985 to “pose policy questions for citizens to ponder, and to utilize resources of people, research, and study guides to work towards a goal of voter education and citizen involvement across the spectrum of Arkansas ideologies.”¹⁴⁸ Other states had created public policy projects, but those were used to “take policy positions and provide information in support of those positions, to encourage specific actions.”¹⁴⁹ The idea of the Project came after the 1985 state Legislative Assembly. During that legislative session, the State of Arkansas cut the budget of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children by twenty-five percent. The state also passed tougher educational standards for public schools. Responding to the passage of those issues, LRP and AFC came together in order to create the Project to bring public policy

¹⁴⁷ Proposal for the Arkansas Public Policy Project 1985, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

issues to the Arkansas public. The Project had four objectives. First, it set out “to establish two public policy forums in six communities each year as vehicles for perception and definition of public policy issues.” Second, it gathered “information on major issues for broad distribution and study.” Third, the Project formed “two or more study groups in each community.” Finally, it established “the credibility/legitimacy of the Project.”¹⁵⁰ Studies on taxes and education helped supplement the work of LRP and AFC. Funding for the Project was received from WRF and the Ford Foundation.¹⁵¹ The Project received a grant from WRF totaling \$11,800 to study the tax code of Arkansas and \$50,000 over two years from the Ford Foundation.¹⁵²

The Project made contact with citizens in various communities throughout the state in order to achieve its goals. Use of public forums to bring citizens of the individual communities together to discuss important issues and its newsletter, *The Public Policy Forum*, provided the Project with a picture and understanding of the political ideologies of the state by sharing information and then going to different regions of Arkansas. The Project sent out six issues per year of its newsletter and added 4,000 members to its mailing list between November 4, 1985, and March 28, 1987. Forums were held in Wynne, Stuttgart, El Dorado, Magnolia, Hot Springs, Menifee, Clarksville, Fox (Meadowcreek), and Marvel to allow citizens of the communities to learn about

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation is an organization that uses grants and strategic partnerships to promote its mission “to improve the lives of Arkansans in three inter-related areas: education, economic development, and economic, racial and social justice.” <http://www.wrfoundation.org/about-wrf/vision-mission-and-values.html>; <http://www.wrfoundation.org/about-wrf.html>, (last accessed 5-12-2013).

¹⁵² The Ford Foundation was established in 1936 and is based in New York City. The mission of the Ford Foundation is “to encourage initiatives by those living and working closest to where problems are located; to promote collaboration among the nonprofit, government and business sectors; and to ensure participation by men and women from diverse communities and all levels of society.” <http://www.fordfoundation.org/about-us/history> <http://www.fordfoundation.org/about-us/mission>, (last accessed 5-12-2013).

important issues and to raise questions. The Project also conducted two major studies on Arkansas taxes, focusing on “tax exemptions and analysis of alternatives for raising revenue.” More than just a single issue organization, the Project also focused on welfare reform, education reform, civil rights, farm service and policy, leadership training, environmental quality, and hunger and homelessness.¹⁵³

The 1985 Arkansas General Assembly enacted tougher standards for schools in the state. Arkansas ranked forty-fourth per capita in education in the U.S. in the 1980s, with almost fifty percent of Arkansans without a high school diploma. The Project proposed the Excellence in Education Program (EEP) to study and improve the Arkansas educational system. EEP plan proposal consisted of three phases. Phase I of the program pulled together the current thinking within the state on education using varying resources such as contract research services to survey the extensive literature. The goal was to have Phase I run from July to September 1987, ending with a manual entitled *Raising Expectations*. Phase II planned to put a field researcher in place to work with communities and get a sample survey of “teachers, administrators, students, school district patrons, civic leaders, and other townspeople” to determine how to utilize the findings of Phase I. Phase II also set up the model for community involvement in educational reform with a publication in May 1988 of the field-tested model. The Project had the goal of implementing EEP in March 1988 with Phase III bringing the model to

¹⁵³ Arkansas Public Policy Project: Report of the Project Director to the Little Rock Panel board, 1987, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

the schools. The model was based on local initiatives that was by local invitation only.¹⁵⁴ However, struggles with funding prevented the plan from being implemented. While funding for EEP proved difficult, other research projects proved successful.

While the Project was setting up EEP, tax reform research funded by WRF and the Ford Foundation provided two reports. *Analysis of Alternatives for Increasing Arkansas Revenue* reviewed the sales tax, income tax, severance tax, and business tax, and explained the problems with the tax code. Arkansas saw a decline in revenue and needed to find a way to increase revenue or make deep cuts to public programs. The sales tax was based on consumption, which is why many states had exemptions or lower rates on necessities such as food and utilities. Arkansas did not have any exemptions at the time. The individual income tax was another point on which the Project focused. The report outlined the economic issues facing Arkansas over budgets and revenues. Prior to the 1987 General Assembly, proposals for increasing revenue for the state included expanding the state severance tax, broadening the sales tax to untaxed services, adopting federal income tax changes, and tightening business tax breaks. Any changes to the tax code “must be addressed in comparison to the requirements of a ‘good’ or ‘ideal’ tax system.”¹⁵⁵ Ideal taxes are equitable, minimize interference with economic decisions, correct inefficiencies, and are efficient, nonarbitrary, understandable, and their cost for lower incomes minimized.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Excellence in Education Program, 1986, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

¹⁵⁵ HISTECON Associates, Inc., “The Arkansas Public Policy Project, Analysis of Alternatives for Increasing Arkansas Revenues,” January 1987.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

The Project's study of the tax system found that "nearly \$300 million" in tax revenue was not being collected. While studying the sales tax, research found that sales taxes were "limited in their ability to fully capture important revenue sources for the state."¹⁵⁷ The *Analysis of Alternatives for Increasing Arkansas Revenues* report also focused on personal income tax. When the income tax was created in Arkansas, it began as a way to "finance improvements in public education."¹⁵⁸ The income tax system in Arkansas became a "flatter tax structure than was intended originally."¹⁵⁹ The report found that a forty-two percent loss of annual receipts created a serious burden to the tax base, sales tax credits would be eliminated, one-half of the state's personal income taxpayers were in the top two brackets, and paid six and seven percent in those brackets, respectively. The report also clarified that Arkansas must adhere to the Tax Reform Act of 1986.¹⁶⁰ LRP and AFC confirmed economic inequality through the results of this tax research.

Analysis of Arkansas Sales Tax Exemptions reviewed the sales tax and the exemptions associated with the code. The sales tax exemptions cost taxpayers \$300 million while the total sales tax collected \$693.6 million in 1985. The agricultural section of the code found that some farmers were unable to receive exemptions because they did not use the same productive inputs. These exemptions added to a \$105.3 million loss in 1985. Business exemptions included unprocessed crude oil sales and sales for resale. The provisions cost the Arkansas treasury more than \$102 million by 1985. Problems faced in researching business exemptions included research teams not having access to

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

confidential information because company reports were considered propriety. Companies were not required to file tax information. The report concluded that options to increase revenue included increasing tax rates, making a partial tax on exemptions, or broadening the tax base by taxing services. Just like *Analysis of Alternatives for Increasing Arkansas Revenues*, the report concluded that the growing service sector would lead to further loss of revenues and the state would have to react to make up for the shortfall.¹⁶¹ AFC felt that the completed reports had enough data and information to design policy proposals that would gain economic equality for Arkansans.

Fighting for Tax Equality

The Little Rock Panel, Inc. became the Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Inc (the Panel) in 1987. The name change reflected its expanded focus toward statewide community organizing. The renamed group followed the same goals to promote and advocate policy on behalf of Arkansas citizens, but altered its approach to statewide grassroots organizing. The Panel's work focused on informing individuals and organizations about tax equality. AFC acted as a sister organization and provided the opportunity for individuals to actively lobby for legislative reform.

AFC began its quest to reform tax policy within the state by starting a petition to bring the tax issue to the Arkansas electorate.¹⁶² AFC had grown to a coalition of twenty organizations by 1987. AFC's predominant focus at the time was reforming Arkansas' sales tax rate. The organization felt that reform was needed to prevent economic inequality for lower income families. It sought to repeal the sales tax on groceries and to

¹⁶¹ HISTECON Associates, Inc., "The Arkansas Public Policy Project, Analysis of Arkansas Sales Tax Exemptions," November 1986.

¹⁶² "AFC Petitions 1987-1988," Box 4, Folder 10, Brownie Ledbetter Collection.

eliminate corporate breaks. Ledbetter stated, “we continue in this state to pursue a policy of giving away more than [thirty-five] percent of our sales tax revenues under the outdated theory that tax breaks will entice industry to come to or to stay in Arkansas. As a result, we never have enough revenue to provide the kind of education, state services or infrastructure that would really develop additional jobs for Arkansas.”¹⁶³

AFC launched the Fairness Plan in January 1987 in order to offer an alternative to the proposed sales tax legislation. The Fairness Plan called for the closing of all sales tax exemptions except those on prescription drugs and charitable agencies. This proposal would have taxed citizens equally in proportion to spending, and would have generated an estimated \$137 million without raising or creating new taxes.¹⁶⁴

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 was implemented in 1987, therefore the State of Arkansas devoted most of its legislative session to finding solutions for a budget shortfall. Governor Bill Clinton announced the formation of the Tax Reform Commission on June 9, 1987, in order to determine the progressiveness of the tax system, review the tax burden and capacity on the State of Arkansas, determine the impact of federal tax reform on Arkansas taxpayers, and recommend revisions to the Arkansas tax system. The Commission included Ledbetter and was given eighteen months to compile a report.¹⁶⁵

Shortly after delegation of the Tax Reform Commission, Clinton proposed a tax package that included an increase in sales tax, liquor tax, cigarette tax, and other measures to increase the state’s budget. AFC supported some measures of the governor’s

¹⁶³ David Ivers, “Fairness coalition urges 1-cent tax increase,” *Arkansas Democrat*, April 16, 1987.

¹⁶⁴ Wayne Jordan, “Coalition calls for sales tax reform to meet state’s need for revenue,” *Arkansas Gazette*, January 19, 1987.

¹⁶⁵ Arkansas Tax Reform Commission Report, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

tax proposal, but strongly opposed a sales tax increase that would not equally distribute the tax burden. AFC stated, “increasing the tax burden on low and moderate income Arkansans may be the easiest way to increase state revenues, but it will not stimulate economic growth.”¹⁶⁶

AFC sent members of the legislature an alternative budget proposal to prevent a sales tax increase. The central measure was closing some of the \$650 million in tax exemptions, deductions, and credits. AFC proposed the state should increase the corporate income tax by assessing corporations at an eight percent flat rate.¹⁶⁷ AFC also felt that a minimum of one percent on all exemptions to the sales taxes listed in Arkansas statutes.¹⁶⁸ Believing that “everyone in Arkansas should pay at least a penny,” AFC held a rally on the front steps of the Capitol in which they tossed penny ‘Frisbees’ in a demonstration. The event garnered attention for AFC in the press.¹⁶⁹

The 1987 legislative session did not pass Governor Clinton’s tax package or accept the recommendations put forth by AFC. Instead, the legislature enacted a series of spending cuts, totaling \$95.3 million for that fiscal year. Public schools suffered \$3.9 million in revenue losses, the largest cuts sustained by any agency.¹⁷⁰ AFC did not achieve tax equality by the end of the 1987 legislative session, but believed it was on the right track. The tax reports had been concluded and supported tax inequality claims that

¹⁶⁶ “Memorandum to Arkansas General Assembly,” PAW Records.

¹⁶⁷ Since many corporations had the option of Subchapter S or partnerships, graduating corporate income taxes was unnecessary. Nine states in the region assessed a flat corporate rate in 1988. “Memorandum to Arkansas General Assembly,” PAW Records.

¹⁶⁸ “Memorandum to Arkansas General Assembly,” PAW Records.

¹⁶⁹ Randy Lilleston, “Fairness Council tosses pennies in call for end of tax exemptions,” *Arkansas Democrat*, February 17, 1987.

¹⁷⁰ John Reed and Stephen Steed, “\$8 Million in Spending Cuts Announced; Third this Fiscal Year,” *Arkansas Gazette*, April 16, 1987.

AFC had made. The organization felt that tax reform could be achieved by popular referendum and had support from Governor Clinton. AFC worked for the remainder of 1987 through 1988 to get and campaign for a measure on the ballot.

The proposed Amendment 4 to the Arkansas Constitution was on the statewide ballot for the November 1988 election. The amendment called for the removal of property tax on household goods and called for future tax rate changes to be approved by a three-fifth majority of the legislature or popular referendum. The legislature at the time only required a simple majority to change tax rates.¹⁷¹ Before the election, Clinton pulled his support for the proposed amendment. The ballot measure failed badly at the polls, with only 30.83 percent of Arkansans for the amendment.¹⁷²

Shortly after the 1988 General Election, the Tax Reform Commission finalized its report for the governor. The commission made many recommendations to achieve tax equality. The first recommendation was an amendment to the state constitution on legislative procedures for tax rate change. The second recommendation called for lower income taxpayers who fell below the federal poverty line to not pay state income taxes; and the expansion of middle income taxpayers' tax brackets. High income taxpayers and businesses making over \$100,000 would have a flat tax rate. The third recommendation was a uniform sales tax that included the repeal of numerous exemptions. The final

¹⁷¹According to Amendment 31 of the Constitution of the State of Arkansas, tax increases required a three-fourths legislative majority. The Arkansas Supreme Court later ruled that Amendment 31 only pertained to taxes that were enacted before the adoption of the amendment in 1936; therefore, tax increases only require a simple majority. "Arkansas Tax Reform: A Report and Recommendations on the Arkansas Tax System," Box 1, Folder 9, PAW Records.

¹⁷²"Arkansas General Election Results – 1988," Secretary of State, www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/Documents/Historical (accessed April 15, 2013).

recommendation of the commission to the governor was to have additional funding appropriated in order for the commission to continue researching tax effectiveness.¹⁷³

AFC sent a memorandum to all members of the 1989 General Assembly that outlined the approved measures of Clinton's tax package. AFC agreed with most of Clinton's tax plan, however it was against an increase in the sales tax and proposed closing some of the \$650 million in tax exemptions, deductions, and credits. AFC believed that necessary improvements in Arkansas education were possible without requiring an increased tax burden on lower and middle class families that was unfairly placed upon them under the tax system of the 1980s. AFC's argument was, "it makes no sense to raise the salaries of state employees and teachers by charging them an extra penny on every necessity that they buy. That is not only unfair, it is not progress."¹⁷⁴ AFC also felt that wealthy Arkansans and large corporations should have to pay an equal proportion of tax bills. It felt that low and middle class Arkansans had been footing the majority of the tax burden, which was neither fair nor effective at improving economic conditions in Arkansas. A tax reform package again failed to pass through the 1989 Legislature and funding was not appropriated to extend research by the Tax Reform Commission.¹⁷⁵

Returning to Grassroots

Clinton's retreat on the tax issue, the election defeat of Amendment 4, and the lack of legislative support created a serious setback for the Panel and AFC. Enacting

¹⁷³ "Arkansas Tax Reform: A Report and Recommendations on the Arkansas Tax System," Box 1, Folder 9, Paw Records.

¹⁷⁴ "Memorandum to Arkansas General Assembly," PAW Records.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

policy change for equality through compiling research and reports did not have the results that the Panel and AFC had desired. The organizations had to reorganize in order to move forward with the fight for equality issues. The Panel realized that it needed to start organizing people, with the understanding that the state did not “need another policy report to move forward, but people standing behind that policy to move it forward.”¹⁷⁶ The Panel began to turn away from legislative policy and instead began to focus on community organizing. It looked at what communities could do to create and influence change.¹⁷⁷

Many communities across the state began to experience environmental issues starting in the late 1980s through the early part of the 1990s. The Panel became involved in these communities to help fight against the issues that threatened their homes. In the late 1980s, a group within Little Rock, Save the Parks, fought against a proposed extension of the Rebsamen Park Road that “would have added so much traffic to that two lane road that it would have essentially destroyed the parks.”¹⁷⁸ The Panel provided support for groups that became concerned with environmental issues. The approval for incinerators for chemical waste sites led the Panel to create roadblocks to prevent the incinerators from going into effect, and to assist the groups within the communities to “brainstorm” how citizens can protect their community. Echoing previous issues tackled by the Panel, the issue of environmentalism was centered on equality. Incinerators were placed in low-income neighborhoods and were set to be placed in areas where the

¹⁷⁶ Bill Kopsky, interview with Dewey Dykes, Little Rock, Arkansas, March 22, 2013.

¹⁷⁷ Janet Perkins, interview with Megan Dunaway, February 24, 2013, Little Rock, AR.

¹⁷⁸ Barry Haas, interview with J.D. Gatlin, February 12, 2013, Little Rock, AR.

burning of waste would affect school children with the release of chemicals into the air.

The concern was equality of health and living.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Arkansas Public Policy Panel Addresses Environmental Issues

The Little Rock Panel, Inc. renamed itself the Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Inc. (the Panel) in 1987. Accompanying its new name was the organization's change of focus away from policy development and toward investing its energy into planning and community organizing. The Panel still had the same goal of addressing inequality and injustice, but did so with a different strategy. Members of the Panel recognized that the same types of problems existed regarding public policy decisions and public involvement in the political process across seemingly varied, disparate issues.¹⁸⁰ The Panel based its new strategy behind the idea that building a network of grassroots groups was more useful in addressing issues experienced by different communities and influencing legislation "than individual single issue groups."¹⁸¹ The objective of this new strategy was to bring Arkansans across the state together into active participation in the political process to more effectively address various issues of inequality and injustice found in different communities. One issue that the group believed would be applicable to all regardless of social status, income, race, gender, or partisan affiliation was environmentalism.

¹⁸⁰ Barry Haas interview.

¹⁸¹ "Minutes from the tapes of the Panel's newly formed Board organization and training retreat," November 16, 1991, Box 1, Folder 5, The Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Little Rock (hereafter Processed Panel Papers).

Establishing a Broader Community

The Panel, and specifically Brownie Ledbetter, wanted to expand the organization's focus to a broader community by reaching out to environmental grassroots groups in Arkansas in the early 1990s.¹⁸² Environmental issues were added to the Board's organizational development plan before the 1991 election of Panel Board members. Tax issues were still included at this time, but were viewed as interrelated with environmental concerns, such as continued economic growth of the Natural State's attraction for those who enjoy outdoor leisure activities as well as "improving the equity and application of state tax laws to assure that polluters were required to pay their fair share for clean up and enforcement programs."¹⁸³ While it was understood that poor environmental practices affected the citizens of local communities indiscriminately, the Panel's expanded focus also reflected a broader theme. The message Ledbetter and others from the Panel wanted to spread was that environmental justice, economic justice, and social justice were all from the same philosophical cloth.¹⁸⁴ Small communities comprised of low-income and minority families facing injustices were in need of help in identifying and addressing the issues experienced by many in America within their same demographic.

Reorganizing the Board and the Mission

The new Board for the Panel was formed through a mail ballot election in July 1991, disseminated to former Panel members by Jim Lynch, a Research Associate for the Center for Arkansas Initiatives at UALR. The election resulted in providing the Panel

¹⁸² Bruce McMath, interview with Adrienne McGill, Little Rock, Arkansas, March 5, 2013.

¹⁸³ "Arkansas Public Policy Panel Board Minutes," July 18, 1991, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

¹⁸⁴ Bruce McMath interview. The Panel was not the only organization whose focus expanding to larger social themes at this time. For more information on organizations' transition from specific issues to broader, more complex issues see Hilda E. Kurtz "Reflections on the Iconography of Environmental Justice Activism." *Area*, 37:1 (Mar., 2005): 79-88.

Board with twelve members with varied experience including educational, environmental, legal, and others.¹⁸⁵ Lynch was elected as the Panel's Board President and Ledbetter as Vice President. Although the Panel reorganized its Board, Ledbetter was still the primary figure of the organization.¹⁸⁶ She wanted to make sure that the new strategic plan of community organizing and training reached as many communities across Arkansas as possible.

The Panel's field organizer Dan Pless traveled across the state between January and May 1991, to determine who and where grassroots groups, organizations, or community groups concerned with environmental issues were located in Arkansas, along with their level of activity and involvement with other environmental groups.¹⁸⁷ A grant provided by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF) gave the financial support needed for the Panel to create an organizational assessment survey to determine what types of assistance were needed from participating groups and communities. The training available from the Panel ranged from how to increase funds and sustain membership to how to deal with the media press and opposing groups.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ The Board members (and their other associations) for 1991 were as follows: President Jim Lynch, Center for Arkansas Initiatives, UALR; Vice President Brownie Ledbetter, Arkansas Fairness Council; Dr. Stella Capek, Sociology Department Hendrix College; Patty Frase, Environmental Congress of Arkansas; Howard Goggans, Retired Paper Company Financial Exec.; Calvin King, Arkansas Land & Farm Development, Inc.; Grainger Ledbetter, Little Rock Classroom Teachers Assoc.; Tom McGowan, Youngdahl, Trotter, McGowan & Farris Law Firm; Bruce McMath, McMath Law Firm; E. J. Miller, Int'l Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine & Furniture Workers; Hurlon Ray, Retired Senior EPA Exec.; and Ray West, Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers. "Arkansas Public Policy Panel memorandum," September 13, 1991, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

¹⁸⁶ Fay Knox, interview with Adrienne McGill, Little Rock, Arkansas, March 6, 2013.

¹⁸⁷ Minutes, July 18, 1991, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

¹⁸⁸ Varied areas of assistance that these groups were surveyed in by the Arkansas Public Policy Panel were: "increase fundraising ability; increase and sustain membership; increase participation of members; improve press relations; increase community awareness; identify community leaders; increase dialogue within the community; assess the influence of various community segments/constituencies; survey the community for support/opposition; network with other groups; obtain testing or other scientific/technical assistance; deal with opposing groups; obtain nonprofit status and/or IRS tax deductible status," July 18, 1991, Box 1,

Funding the New Mission and Outreach

The Panel, by this point in its history, was known for its work among some circles within Arkansas's communities; however, other groups in rural areas that were in need of services the Panel provided remained unaware that the organization existed. Shortly after the new Board was formed, it submitted a proposal for funding to the WRF and the Panel was awarded a Planning and Development Grant in September 1991. The WRF grant was used to complete two objectives: develop an internal organizational strategy for the Board members, and externally organize eight to ten new grassroots groups along with ten to twelve workshops in the Delta and south Arkansas.¹⁸⁹ The WRF also urged the Panel to encourage more involvement from African American communities. Environmental studies conducted in the 1980s and 1990s showed that environmental abuses occurred more often in predominately non-white, low-income communities, thereby identifying a link between environmental racism and environmental abuses found across the U.S.¹⁹⁰

Ledbetter, in trying to establish new grassroots groups and workshops outside of central Arkansas, traveled across the state to provide training to small community groups focused on how to get involved in the public policy process. Panel members of the early 1990s saw "the powerhouse of [Ledbetter] going around and trying to make friends and influence people and providing training to whoever was out there requesting it."¹⁹¹

Folder 5; "Arkansas Public Policy Panel Organization Assessment Survey," circa Fall 1991, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

¹⁸⁹ Minutes, September 18, 1991, Box 1, Folder 5; Memorandum, September 13, 1991, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

¹⁹⁰ For more information on the imbalance of environmental abuses in non-white communities and environmental racism, see ed. Robert D. Bullard *Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color*, (Sierra Club Books: San Francisco, 1994); Glenn Steve Johnson *Toxins! Tocsin: The North Hollywood Dump in Memphis, Tennessee: A Community's Struggle Against Environmental Racism*, (University of Tennessee Press, 1996); and eds. Paul S. Sutter & Christopher J. Manganiello *Environmental History and the American South, A Reader*, (University of Georgia Press, 2009).

¹⁹¹ Fay Knox interview.

Ledbetter held regional Board meetings in various areas, such as the Northwest, the Delta, and south Arkansas, where environmental concerns had arisen in local communities as well as other issues that raised the concern of residents in order to expand the Panel's connections to various communities. These people were passionate about the issues they wanted addressed, but largely remained unaware of possible solutions.

The Panel's goal was to form groups in areas in need of an organizational development plan and to provide these communities with information and training. Working with communities outside of central Arkansas provided the Panel the opportunity to act as a facilitator, by connecting groups with others that also had specific issues or agendas across the state to one another, in an effort to form a statewide network. Groups within the network were strengthened through training and the information that the Panel provided, but were also empowered by the bridges they built with one another and with the Panel. Much of this outreach to small communities occurred through word of mouth, a small mailing list, and numerous phone calls.¹⁹²

The long-term objective of the Panel was to help environmental grassroots groups in Arkansas become more effective by helping them build relationships beyond single environmental abuses and by increasing their membership.¹⁹³ These groups would then be able to form a statewide coalition better able to address inequality and injustice in Arkansas and more effectively reform public policy in the state. Keeping this long-term

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ "Board Development Session, Minutes from the tapes of the November Retreat," November 16, 1991; "Notes and Conclusions from Second Board Planning Session," January 18, 1992, Box 1, Folder 5. Processed Panel Papers.

goal as a guide, the Panel planned and organized various groups within the Panel's network during much of the 1990s, which ultimately culminated in the Citizens First Congress (CFC) towards the end of the decade. The communities and grassroots groups that experienced environmental issues and abuses in Arkansas and advocated on behalf of local citizens saw others in similar situations across America.

Contextualizing Environmental Legislation

The nation experienced a growth in awareness regarding environmental concerns over the course of the 1980s, as seen through legislation from the period. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1980 and commissioned the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to create a list of all the nation's Superfund sites, which were known hazardous wastes sites.¹⁹⁴ These sites were plotted based on found hazardous agents that caused the location to be polluted and in need of a cleanup effort. The cleanup effort, usually a long-term endeavor, was to be done by the responsible parties or, if unable to hold any parties accountable, cleaned up by the EPA with federal funding.

Congress introduced U.S. Public Law 99-145 in 1985, which required the Department of Defense to begin destruction of all existing chemical weapons in 1986, to be completed by 1994.¹⁹⁵ The agreement was redrafted in 1988 and the resultant Chemical Stockpile Disposal Program selected Baseline incineration and thermal

¹⁹⁴ United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), <http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/cercla.html> (accessed 3/16/13).

¹⁹⁵ United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1986*, Public Law 99-145, Attachment E: *Lethal Unitary Chemical Agents and Munitions*, <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/plan/6-ch-e.pdf> (accessed 4/1/13); Library of Congress, *Bill Summary and Status for the 99th Congress (1985-1986) S. 1160*, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d099:SN01160:@@L&summ2=m&> (accessed 4/1/13).

treatment as its method of chemical weapons disposal. This disposal method, still used today, is a three step process that, first separates the hazardous agent from its containers, second, incinerates the agent through multiple (normally four process streams) furnaces and finally, treats any discharge/residual pollution created via the incineration process and dispose of any remaining solid waste.¹⁹⁶

The international community witnessed President George H.W. Bush and Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev sign the bilateral Agreement on Destruction and Non-production of Chemical Weapons and on Measures to Facilitate the Multilateral Convention on Banning Chemical Weapons in 1990. Commonly known as the 1990 U.S.-Soviet Chemical Weapons Accord, this agreement stipulated that neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union would continue chemical weapons production. It also called for both nations to begin the process of destroying their respective chemical stockpiles, to begin within three years after the signing of the agreement.

Legislation from the 1980s had a direct relationship to communities in Arkansas as citizens across the state grew concerned with local environmental issues. The same year CERCLA was passed by Congress, the EPA designated ten federal Superfund sites in the state of Arkansas, three of which were located in Jacksonville within three miles of one another. These sites were the Vertac Chemical plant, the Rogers Road landfill, and the Jacksonville city dump, all with community residences in their vicinity. The EPA found improper disposal of hazardous waste at the Vertac site, but it was not until 1985 that the agency released information gathered from a study regarding the chemical dioxin found in Jacksonville.

¹⁹⁶ Copy of the Executive Summary of the 1994 Stimson Center report, April 11, 1994, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

The state of Arkansas signed a contract with MRK Incineration, Inc. to build an incinerator at the Vertac site in 1988.¹⁹⁷ When the citizens of Jacksonville discovered that the Vertac site was to begin incinerating hazardous agents and chemical weapons within the vicinity of the community's residences, a day care center, an elementary school, as well as a hospital, and nursing home, they openly opposed the incineration method for fear of harmful contamination.

Addressing Arkansas's Environmental Issues

The Panel's expanded focus on environmental concerns became an avenue that led more groups and concerned Arkansans to the organization. Panel Board members in 1990 hoped "to identify enough interest to launch a statewide initiative of education and public awareness to protect the health of Arkansas's people and their Natural State," and to "learn about the potential for organizing [*sic*] and obtaining financial support for an environmental issues campaign."¹⁹⁸ That same year, members of the Environmental Congress of Arkansas (ECA) asked the Panel to assist them by providing an office. Connecting to other like-minded organizations furthered the Panel's existing efforts regarding social and economic justice for disfranchised groups and communities in the state. The Panel, in 1992, commissioned an Environmental Policy Institute event to be held at Camp Aldersgate.¹⁹⁹ The Environment Policy Institute's one-day event provided

¹⁹⁷ MRK Incineration, Inc. was formed in 1989 and based out of Louisiana. Notably, Vertac Site Contractors, the group originally contracted with the state of Arkansas for the cleanup effort, was a joint venture with MK Environmental Services, a division of the Morrison Knudsen Corporation, and MRK Incineration, Inc. MRK Incineration, Inc. was one defending party referred to in a False Claims Act suit, filed in 1995. The company's name is as shown here. [317 F. 3d 883, No. 01-3764; <https://bulk.resource.org/courts.gov/c/F3/317/317.F3d.883.01-3764.html>] (last accessed 3-16-13).

¹⁹⁸ Correspondence from President Jim Lynch, August 31, 1990, Box 1, Folder 14, Processed Panel Papers.

¹⁹⁹ Located in Pulaski County, Camp Aldersgate had already served Arkansans as a progressive meeting area since its dedication in 1947, promoting Christian fellowship and community activities across racial

participants with the opportunity to discuss Arkansas's public policy regarding protective measures for the state's environment. The event was designed to "stimulate grassroots awareness, build stronger local groups and raise [the Panel's] funds to continue the long-term effort."²⁰⁰ The three discussion panels scheduled for the event were, "Research and Data Gaps in the Arkansas Environmental Policy Data Base," "Environmental Issues in Arkansas Communities," and "Environmental Issues for the 1993 Assembly."²⁰¹

One environmental issue panel members sought to address was the Vertac Chemical plant site and its effects on the citizens of Jacksonville. The Panel's then Board President Lynch and Vice President Ledbetter composed a letter in 1990 to Senator David Pryor regarding the issuance of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Vertac Chemical plant site. An EIS is used under the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act's (NEPA) ongoing policies with regards to environmental issues and public awareness. The NEPA issues the statement to provide citizens with a "full and fair discussion of significant environmental impacts and shall inform decision makers and the public of the reasonable alternatives which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment."²⁰²

Sen. Pryor asked the EPA about the issuance of an EIS. Robert E. Layton Jr., P.E. Regional Administrator, responded that there would be no EIS issued because the Remedial Investigations and Feasibility Studies at Superfund sites provided the same

lines before public spaces were integrated. Cathy Hall Bacon, "Camp Aldersgate," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=2298> (Last modified, 9/22/2007).

²⁰⁰ Correspondence from President Lynch, September 2, 1992, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

²⁰¹ Capek, *A History of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel*.

²⁰² Environmental Impact Statement, § 1502.1. United States Council on Environmental Quality. <http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/Nepa/regs/ceq/1502.htm> (accessed 4/1/13).

information and functioned the same as an EIS.²⁰³ The Panel continued to work to create more public awareness regarding the environmental issues surrounding the incineration plan at the Vertac site and saw progress among citizens' concern and "key public officials who previously strongly supported incineration as the only alternative."²⁰⁴ But by 1992, the cleanup effort at the Vertac site, then going on for twelve years, was still not close to completion. Many of the barrels of hazardous waste found at the site that had been in the elements and corroding were only being re-barreled.²⁰⁵ Though the Panel did not receive the response it hoped, the Vertac site along with the potential environmental and health concerns that worried Jacksonville citizens continued to be an environmental issue the Panel addressed.

Another location in Arkansas that had become an environmental issue to local residents and the Panel in the 1990s was the Pine Bluff Arsenal (PBA). Built in 1941 as the Chemical Warfare Arsenal, PBA served the Department of Defense as a chemical weapons production and stockpile site during World War II and continued as a chemical experimentation and storage location.²⁰⁶ Congress's 1990 call for ceased production of chemical agents and the destruction of the nation's stockpiles led the PBA site to be scheduled as one of nine locations where incineration facilities were to be built by 1995. Specifically, PBA was to destroy hazardous nerve agents and by 1997 held 12.3 percent of the U.S.' chemical weapons stockpile. That same year, PBA was one of three

²⁰³ Correspondence from President Lynch & Vice President Ledbetter, November 27, 1990, Box 1, Folder 4, Processed Panel Papers.

²⁰⁴ Emphasis from original source. Correspondence from President Lynch, July 2, 1991, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

²⁰⁵ The Vertac site has continued to be an environmental concern for Jacksonville residents. The most recent EPA report on the site was published in March 2013. <http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/pdf/vertac-ar.pdf> (accessed 4/14/13).

²⁰⁶ Russell E. Bearden, "Pine Bluff Arsenal," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=2927> (last modified, 10-17-2012).

munitions sites with incinerators; the other two were Anniston, Alabama and Umatilla, Oregon. The citizens of Pine Bluff were concerned that the incinerator built near their homes would produce dangerous emissions and expose residents to harmful toxins. The Panel helped these worried citizens access information on the effects of exposure to pollutants and how to have their concerns respected by the Department of Defense.²⁰⁷

The Panel's Board had grown from twelve to approximately forty members by the mid-1990s.²⁰⁸ This growth was a reflection of the new strategy the Panel found success with in its effort to build a loose network of individual, single issue groups into a larger body made up of "diverse groups with separate agendas and backgrounds [that saw] a common ground" and linkages across issues.²⁰⁹ Lynch was still the president of the organization in 1993, but Reverend H. O. Gray of Pine Bluff served as the vice president and Ledbetter was the Panel's executive director. The Panel wanted to address the broader theme of inequality and injustice experienced in Arkansas, and worked to help connect groups and organizations in the state with the WRF planning and development grant awarded in 1991. The Panel, by 1993, had developed "a multi-issues, multi-county network of local and statewide grassroots [groups] and organizations" and sought to "transform this loose network into a self-sustaining statewide coalition that will serve as a

²⁰⁷ "The Arkansas Public Policy Panel" laminated booklet, circa 1999-2000. Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²⁰⁸ Board listing, circa 1996, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers. The Panel's Board had more members from grassroots groups and organizations in Little Rock as well as areas outside of central Arkansas by this point. These affiliate group members included Scott County Organization for Protection of the Environment, Arkansas Conservation Coalition, the Little Rock chapter of the NAACP, Chemical Weapons Working Group, White River Environmental Protection Association, Arkansas Land and Farm Development, and Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union, to name a few. Board listing, circa 1996, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

²⁰⁹ Minutes from the tapes of the Panel's newly formed Board organization and training retreat, November 16, 1991, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

formidable lever for correcting the imbalance of power in the Arkansas policy making process.”²¹⁰

Also in 1993, the Panel designed the Public Interest Support Center (PISC) project following a statewide conference of twenty-eight grassroots and local groups in the Panel’s network. The goal of this project was “to assist new and existing grassroots groups to develop their own individual political agendas and link [*sic*] them together in a unified coalition that respects the diversity of their issues, the independence of each group, and the need to work collectively on common issues at the state level.”²¹¹ This was a step closer to the Panel’s long-term objective of helping grassroots organizations and other groups in Arkansas connect to one another and become more effective in their participation in the political process.

One of the larger planning objectives that involved the Panel was the Delta Project. Beginning in 1994, the Panel worked to help residents of east Arkansas to organize their communities and connect with other groups around environmental issues faced by various small communities in this region of the state. Five groups resulted from this community organizing: Citizens Against Pollution (CAP) located in Mariana, Lee County; Concerned Citizens of Phillips County; Delta Environmental Ecology Project (DEEP) of Helena and West Helena, Phillips County; West Memphians Involving Neighbors (WIN); and Women's Leadership Support Group in Phillips County; and Women’s Leadership Support Group.²¹² The Panel was awarded a \$5,000 grant for a

²¹⁰ Grant proposal to the Tides Foundation, circa 1995, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

²¹¹ “Grant proposal to the Tides Foundation,” circa 1995, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

²¹² “Grant proposal to McKnight Foundation, February 28, 1997,” Box 3, Folder 5. Processed Panel Papers; “The Arkansas Public Policy Panel,” laminated booklet, circa 1999-2000. Unprocessed Panel Papers

Delta organizer from the McKnight Foundation to organize and train groups in these areas.²¹³

Also in 1994, motivated by approximately thirty groups within the Panel's network, the organization began to develop a three-year plan to design a PISC that would conduct research and provide information on public issues that were chosen by the groups. The Panel wanted to increase citizen participation in local and state government because it held that a problem existed in the poor representation in public policy decisions for low and middle-income families in Arkansas. The objective for PISC was "to provide research, political training, and access to relevant agencies and public officials for groups as well as linking them together in a more structured way to develop some unity in addressing the imbalance in public policy decisions in [the] state between citizens and agricultural and business interests."²¹⁴ Hoping to improve how public policy decisions were made and to be more beneficial for Arkansas' citizens who were faced with injustices, the Panel worked with the AFC to form a statewide coalition.²¹⁵

The three-year plan for PISC was funded by WRF and included seven objectives, which included identifying five local groups and their respective leaders, raising the numbers of the Panel's network of grassroots groups, creating brochures that could be used by multiple groups within the network, and designing and carrying out community forums attended by constituency representatives as well as presentations by agencies or

²¹³ "WRF Progress Report for Grant # 94-200, Grant Year Two of Three," April-July 1996, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

²¹⁴ Board Memo, August 2, 1994, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

²¹⁵ In 1994 the Panel was also awarded a \$190,000 grant from the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to fund its Fair Housing Council Project to enforce fairer housing practices but this project did not come to fruition. Board memo, August 2, 1994, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers; Fay Knox interview; Bruce McMath interview.

public officials to respond to the concerns of citizens.²¹⁶ Inspired by the PISC model, the Panel coordinated the Arkansas Watershed Alliance in 1995 to address the chip mill industry and examine potential dangers of clearing Arkansas' hardwood forests. The process behind the chip mill industry included hardwood trees being cut into two inch chips for transportation overseas where the exported material was processed into paper. Arkansas had two operating chip mills in Menifee and Van Buren in 1996 along with the approval of the construction of a third in Dardanelle by July of that year despite the state having "one of the fastest growing anti-chip mill movements in the country."²¹⁷ The driving force behind this movement was the Arkansas Watershed Alliance, which contended that the chip mill industry used improper harvesting methods and removed too much of Arkansas's hardwoods.

This issue regarding the chip mill industry in Arkansas was the topic of the Panel's first issue of its newsletter *Policy Watch* in the summer of 1996. This newsletter, published quarterly, kept Arkansans "updated on the work of the Panel and [provided] a place where members of [the] network [could] communicate."²¹⁸ *Policy Watch* articles focused on environmental abuses across the state, social injustices experienced by citizens, along with current work of grassroots groups and affiliate organizations. Issues

²¹⁶ The WRF grant awarded to the Panel for the Public Interest Support Center totaled \$69,186. The other three objectives within this grant were: (1) "Provide structured/participatory training to raise public awareness of community needs, build community support, identify local people/groups with influence in their communities, promote dialogue on local needs and develop effective lobbying skills."; (2) "Provide mechanisms for sharing the work of each group with all groups in the network such as issue briefs/fact sheets and a newsletter published a minimum of four times a year."; and (3) "Offer services to groups such as computerized mailing lists, bulk rate mailings and planning for local or regional fundraising." "WRF Progress Report for Grant # 94-200," April-July 1996, Box 1, Folder 5; "Letter to Edward Skloot of the Surdna Foundation, Inc. from Development Director Lauren A. Riggan," September 12, 1995, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers.

²¹⁷ *Policy Watch*, July 1996, Box 1, Folder 15, Processed Panel Papers.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.* The first issue of the *Policy Watch* was published in July 1996 but the first full-length version appeared with the newsletter's second issue, published in fall of 1996.

also included letters from thankful Arkansans and information on how to get involved with the Panel.

Another environmental issue experienced by Arkansans was improper disposal of offal from large pork production operations. Arkansas's pork production increased by more than 100 percent between the late 1980s and late 1990s, as reflected in one of the top hog-production areas in the country, Washington County, Arkansas, which had more than 90,000 hogs and pigs in 1997.²¹⁹ According to agricultural statistics in the late 1990s, "Northwest Arkansas [was] home to about 244,000 hogs and pigs" but the number of farms dedicated to hog production had decreased by more than fifty percent since the 1970s.²²⁰ The hog and chicken industry began making contracts with local farmers in response to the growing demand for pork products, as seen in contracts between Tyson Foods Inc. and local hog farmers in Arkansas. This was beneficial to both the large company and the farmers but lead to environmental hazards, such as large amounts of manure produced from large-scale, confined animal operations which ran off into local waterways along with the odor from animal waste. Regulation 5 of the Arkansas Department of Pollution Control and Ecology dictated that, in order to regulate "animal waste runoff and offensive odors...hog, dairy, and chicken farms must obtain a permit to use a liquid manure disposal system" and "require[d] farmers to build pits and lagoons" to adequately store the waste produced by their operations.²²¹

Though this regulation measure was in place and enforced by the state Department of Pollution Control and Ecology, many in Arkansas felt it was not enough to

²¹⁹ *Northwest Arkansas Business Matters*, "Waste an Issue as Pig Farms Grow Bigger," May 18, 1997, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

address the environmental issues that resulted from the state's hog farms. The Panel was one of five local groups who joined together to form the Arkansas Coalition for Responsible Swine Production in 1997 address the lack of effectiveness of Regulation 5 and to help establish "more controls on smell and ground water pollution produced by hog farms."²²² Offensive odor from hog farm operations had brought members of the coalition together but there were other issues they wanted addressed. The Panel coauthored a report which found numerous violations among the state's hog farms in 1998 with sixty-eight percent of these violations pertaining to "serious offenses like spills, improper disposal of dead carcasses and improper waste lagoon operation."²²³ The following year, a former Tyson contractor captured the company's illegal dumping of liquid animal waste down a slope into a creek in Hiwasse, Arkansas, on video.²²⁴ The violation caught on video furthered the Panel desire to see more restrictions on hog farms.²²⁵

Also during the mid-1990s, the Panel began examining consumer protection issues, particularly regarding energy, telephone and cable service options in the state. The Panel provided the only independent analysis of these services in order to promote the deregulation of the market to promote competition so low-income and rural consumers in

²²² "Odor Drives Coalition Seeking Tougher Limits on Hog Farms," *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, June 28, 1997, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²²³ Press Release from Tyson Foods Inc called the report "cynical, misleading and absolutely false." "Tyson Hog Operation out of Bounds Most Often, Report Says," *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, July 21, 1999, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²²⁴ The former Tyson Foods Inc. employee who videotaped the violation was Billy Hutchins, a truck driver for the company whose position entailed taking the liquid animal waste from Hiwasse to a farm approximately five miles away where it would then be spread over an approved farm area. "Illegal Dumping on Video," *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, March 26, 1999, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²²⁵ The Panel is still involved in this issue as of 2013. The organization had a successful win with some hog farms in the state being capped at no more than 6,000 head of hogs but environmental issues with hog and chicken operations continue to exist. Bill Kopsky, written comments, May 2013.

Arkansas could have options when choosing their service providers.²²⁶ The Panel understood that utility deregulation was another issue where injustice was felt by Arkansans, but one that citizens may have been unaware of how to address. The problematic issue found within the utility service market was a lack of service provider options, making local telephone service providers monopolies; therefore, the Panel appeared before the Public Service Commission to promote consumer protections and more competition within the local utility service market.²²⁷ The Telecommunications Act of 1996 was signed by President Clinton to deregulate this market, allowing for more varied providers to enter into the telecommunications business, which had been considered as dominated by monopoly-like companies.²²⁸ Also at this time, Arkansas's telecommunications bill was being re-written and Alltel had begun providing Internet connections in 1997.²²⁹

Building a Statewide Coalition

Bill Kopsky came to work for the Panel in 1996. Upon his arrival in Arkansas, Ledbetter assigned Kopsky three tasks. First, Kopsky took control of the Panel newsletter. Second, he attended the Southern Organizing Project in Maryville, Tennessee. An intensive, six-week long school, Kopsky credits with transforming him

²²⁶ "The Arkansas Public Policy Panel," laminated booklet, circa 1999-2000. Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Federal Communications Commission, *Telecommunications Act of 1996*, Public Law 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (1996), <http://transition.fcc.gov/telecom.html> (last modified 5-31-2011)

²²⁹ "Current Status of Telecommunications" report, November 14, 1996, Box 1, Folder 5, Processed Panel Papers. Alltel merged with Verizon Wireless in January 2009. Kent German, "On Call: How the Alltel/Verizon merger affects you," CNET, <http://www.cnet.com/alltel-verizon-merger/> (last accessed 4-27-13).

into a community organizer. The third task sent him on a tour of the state, meeting and beginning to form relationships with groups that the Panel already had experience.²³⁰

The Panel, in 1997, organized a rally in Little Rock on the Capitol steps. The rally centered on opposition to the Takings Bill, which proposed lessened environmental restrictions for corporations in Arkansas. Approximately 150 people gathered and listened as members of grassroots organizations from around the state spoke about corporate backlash against environmental regulations and their infringement of individual property rights around the state. The rally was particularly important because it showed the Panel a successful strategy to implement in organizing a larger statewide coalition. The vision was to create a body much like the earlier AFC of the 1980s but to give it a much wider scope and membership base than AFC. Additionally, this new coalition was to absorb and assume the 501(c)(4) IRS designation in order to be an effective lobbying body.²³¹ This idea, of course, involved an expansive, diverse collection of groups organizing together and the staff was concerned with how to join those groups. Following the rally, the staff saw the answer become more apparent, as people gathered for hours on the capitol steps to discuss and debate the issues brought up. “We learned that we didn’t need to force the diversity issue, we had to set the stage and create the space - but people would build the bridges largely on their own by building relationships and sharing stories ... really propelled us towards finally convening the coalition officially the next year.”²³²

The Panel organized a board meeting in Perryville, Arkansas at the Heifer Project International ranch to discuss the creation of a large, statewide coalition of groups during

²³⁰ Bill Kopsky, interview with Dewey Dykes, Little Rock, Arkansas, March 22, 2013.

²³¹ Celestine Wesley interview.

²³² Capek, *A History of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel*.

the summer of 1997. The focus of the meeting was the creation of a basic structure and governance procedures for the coalition group. Much of the early debate at the meeting revolved around the strategy to be pursued by the new coalition group, and to a larger extent, the Panel itself. Many on the Board wanted the coalition to focus solely on environmental advocacy, while others felt a more multi-issue, inclusive model of advocacy to be more effective. The multi-issue strategy was retained, and the basic steps for how groups would interact within what would become the Arkansas Citizens First Congress (CFC) were outlined. Organizations joined the coalition; the coalition then met, and created a platform that prioritized the concerns of the body of the coalition. The CFC convened for the first time between November 20-22, 1998 in Hot Springs. From this first meeting, six legislative priorities were identified to be pursued during the 1999 session of the Arkansas General Assembly, eliminating conflict of interest voting on state regulatory boards, strengthening domestic violence victim protections, prohibiting the incineration of chemical weapons at Pine Bluff, creating an Agricultural Business Council to represent small farmers within the state, repealing a law that limited the state from passing stronger environmental regulations than existing federal minimum standards, and encouraging the adoption and use of clean and renewable energy sources.²³³

The funds required to begin the CFC were placing a strain on the reserve funds of the Panel by 1998. The Panel did reach its goal of raising \$20,000 for its general fund, but in a 1998 board meeting Beth Ardapple noted that the next year a larger goal be set. Board members hosted house parties to promote the Panel and as fundraising

²³³ Ibid.

opportunities.²³⁴ Also, Americorps*VISTA awarded the Panel five positions, which was important as it allowed for the core staff of the Panel to continue their work while also allowing for members of communities to be hired to organize in their own communities, this approach allowed for easier bonds and relationships to be built in many cases.²³⁵ In addition to setting these priorities, the coalition created an award for outstanding community organizers and activists across the state. Called the Dragon Slayer Award, it is given at every CFC convention in recognition of these efforts by different groups.²³⁶ The award is based on a political cartoon that was published in the mid-1980s depicting Ledbetter in full knight's armor fighting against two dragons named racism and sexism.²³⁷

Ledbetter retired as the executive director of the Panel in 1999. Having served nearly forty years as a key figure and leader in the Panel, she stepped aside. Kopsky became the interim executive director as a search for Ledbetter's successor began. The Panel Board offered the job to Kopsky three times before he accepted. Only twenty-eight at the time, he urged the Board to continue looking for someone with more leadership experience. Kopsky finally agreed to become the permanent executive director on the condition that Celestine Wesley stay as a staff member to manage the finances of the Panel.²³⁸

²³⁴ Minutes of Board Meeting of Arkansas Public Policy Panel, October 3, 1998, Box 1, File 5, Processed Panel Papers.

²³⁵ Capek, *A History of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel*.

²³⁶ Previous winners of the Dragon Slayer award are: Scott Trotter (1998); Denele Campbell (2000); Bruce and Becky McMath (2002); Jim Lynch (2004); Curtis Mangrum (2006); Gould Citizens Advisory Council (2008); Beatrice Shelby (2010); Joyce Hale (2013).

²³⁷ Joyce Williams, interview with Britany Simmons, Little Rock, AR, March 1, 2013.

²³⁸ Bill Kopsky interview.

The move towards addressing economic inequalities based on environmental concerns and organizing coalitions on a broad based, grassroots level showed a marked difference in the approach of the Panel from the policy studies of the 1980s and forays into educational inequalities of the 1960s and 1970s. Moving into the new millennium, the Panel continued to address concerns about the environment in local communities, but also began facilitating CFC work in regards to legislative inequalities. Organizing smaller, local organizations into coalitions allowed progressive voices across the state to be heard and acknowledged throughout the halls of the Capitol in Little Rock. The time spent organizing and strategically planning in the 1990s proved integral to this shift in direction to be undertaken by new Executive Director Bill Kopsky.

Panel and Citizens First Congress Fight for Arkansas

The Arkansas Public Policy Panel had addressed economic inequalities and environmental concerns in the 1990s. The rally opposing the Takings Bill mobilized members of the Arkansas Fairness Council (AFC), allowing individual members of the coalition, instead of the leadership, to voice their concerns about the Takings Bill legislation. Success of the rally inspired the AFC to completely reorganize, and the AFC became the Arkansas Citizens First Congress (CFC) in 1998. The CFC focused on reform through the Arkansas Legislature with the strength of an organized body of members united by common goals, while the Panel focused on grassroots political participation. The focus of the Panel and CFC became the idea that progressive change can be affected through citizen participation in the political process.²³⁹

The Panel moved from organizing around specific issues to teaching local community members how to become involved in the political process and create their own organizations. These organizations, in turn, aligned like-minded citizens together to work towards improving the quality of life within their communities by working together with local governments. The new millennium expanded the idea that citizens of Arkansas could find and advance equality, whether economic, social, or educational, through the political process if united with a common goal. The 2000s saw the advance of two main stories for the Panel. First, the organizing work done by the Panel, which created sustainable groups working for change and the betterment of local communities and second, the constant refinement of the CFC.

²³⁹ Linda Carnahan, interview with Dewey Dykes, Russellville, AR, March 25, 2013.

Taking New Direction

Procuring new sources of funding was critical for the Panel when Kopsky took over as executive director. Earlier grants for CFC expired and the Panel was in some financial difficulty. Ledbetter had not taken a salary as executive director, and Kopsky spent his two first years on the job at the same salary he made as an organizer. Funding was also necessary for the increasing staff that the Panel needed to employ in order to continue expanding their community organizing across the state. The Panel increasingly turned to foundations and fundraising events to maintain operational expenses.

The Panel applied to the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation (Babcock Foundation) for an organizational development grant in 1999.²⁴⁰ Based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the Babcock Foundation was a good fit for the Panel as both sought to achieve economic and social justice.²⁴¹ Kopsky and Jim Lynch, President of the Board of Directors, wrote to the Babcock Foundation on December 7, 1999, requesting \$6,000 to assist with the cost of working with the Center for Community Change. Kopsky and Lynch wanted the Center to review and aid the Panel to identify problems within the organization and recommend ways to improve and expand the Panel's work.²⁴² The grant request was successful, signaling a new direction for the Panel and the beginning of a strong relationship between the Panel and the Babcock Foundation, which continues to support the Panel.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Gladys Washington, interview with Ron Kelley via Skype, March 21, 2013.

²⁴¹ "Mission and Beliefs," Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, <http://mrbf.org/mission> (last accessed 5-4-2013).

²⁴² Letter to Gayle Williams, 1999, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²⁴³ Shirley Bondon, interview with Ron Kelley via Skype, March 20, 2013.

The Panel also sought to establish a fundraising base within the organization. Different members of the CFC hosted house parties to raise funds for their local operations and as a means to get to know the other members. The house parties not only served as a means to increase funding for the CFC, but also they were an opportunity to build relationships with other members of the coalition.²⁴⁴ Members from north and south Arkansas came together to discuss issues with which they were dealing and those who were able, made donations to the different groups to aid in their work. These parties enabled the different coalition members to have their own sources of funding as well as accessing those from the foundations that supported the Panel and CFC member organizations.

The Panel sought additional outside assistance to achieve its goals from AmeriCorps*VISTA (VISTA).²⁴⁵ Established in 1965 to fight poverty in America, groups and organizations applied for VISTA volunteers to work with their organization for one year.²⁴⁶ In 2000, the Panel was awarded funding for ten VISTA volunteers. These VISTA volunteers worked in various capacities to aid the Panel and the CFC. Volunteer Dena N. Bucker organized “training events for emerging grassroots leaders” and updated their database.²⁴⁷ Andy Burns, another VISTA volunteer, spent time researching agricultural policies in Arkansas and working “with minority and family farmers” to join the CFC and “assist with the issues they deal with in their daily lives.”²⁴⁸ VISTA volunteers have been

²⁴⁴ Bernadette Devone, interview with Sarah Riva, March 20, 2013.

²⁴⁵ VISTA is an acronym for Volunteers in Service to America.

²⁴⁶ Sponsor a VISTA Project, Corporation for National and Community Service, <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps/amicorps-vista/sponsor-vista-project> (Last accessed 5/4/2013).

²⁴⁷ Report to VISTA, 2000, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²⁴⁸ Report to VISTA, 2001, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

critical for the Panel. Their varied skills have enabled them to be involved in all aspects of the Panel and the CFC to work towards social and economic justice.

The growth of the Panel and the closure of the Boyle Building in June 1999 required the organization to find a new home. Bruce McMath, a member of the Board, came forward with funds to purchase new office space. This allowed the organization to build equity, rather than continue to pay rent. The Panel purchased a 3,000 square foot home at 1308 West Second Street, which they called The Progressive House, in December 1999. The Progressive House was conveniently located just three blocks from the Arkansas State Capitol. Members of the Board hoped that the new space would become a focal point of progressives across the state, allowing like-minded organizations to share space.²⁴⁹ The size of the house afforded the Panel to lease a portion of the office space to other non-profits such as Training Community Organizations for Change, Common Cause of Arkansas, and the Sierra Club.²⁵⁰

The Panel began a strategic planning process in 2000 to advance values, vision, and mission. The Panel realized it needed to adopt a more formal process of planning in order to propel its growth. Three critical areas of planning were identified: a strategic planning process for the Panel, a staff development plan, and a one-year organizational and legislative process for the CFC.²⁵¹

The goals of the strategic planning process for the Panel included creating a three to five year plan for organizing and leadership development. This plan created strategies for local and state organizing. The Panel's plan for local organizing identified strategic

²⁴⁹ Bruce McMath interview.

²⁵⁰ Bill Kopsky interview.

²⁵¹ Copy of the Strategic Planning notebook, 2000, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

regions of the state in which to build grassroots groups to work on “self-defined campaigns targeting issues of injustice or economic well being.”²⁵² The Panel then developed networks between the regions and built a constituency to move legislation at the state level. The plan for state organizing was to develop statewide issue campaigns that were not likely to be resolved without community participation. The campaigns would build the power and influence of the Panel while creating and strengthening regional groups. The state organizing plan also called for the Panel to develop strategies to relate statewide campaigns to the CFC.²⁵³

The staff development plan included filling crucial organizer positions to promote the Panel’s mission. Bernadette Devone, then an organizer for ACORN, was recruited and hired by the Panel as its organizing director.²⁵⁴ Kopsky sent her out into the field, in much the same fashion as Ledbetter had sent him, to determine where the Panel needed to focus its efforts. The Panel helped local groups identify the problems within their own communities and trained them how to become involved in local government.²⁵⁵ Devone traveled the Arkansas delta for nearly a year building relationships and identifying communities within which to work. Members of the town interested in forming an organization came together and began a strategic planning process facilitated by the Panel. The Panel offered leadership development in order to build leaders to work within

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) was a national organization that shared many similar goals with the Panel. Established in Arkansas in 1970 by Wade Rathke and Gary Delgado, ACORN developed leaders in low-income communities to tackle social and economic inequalities. Unlike the Panel who worked with local communities and organizations to deal with issues that they chose, ACORN targeted specific issues like education, housing, and health care. In 2010 ACORN declared bankruptcy and dissolved in part due to problems it had unifying its different member groups. For more information see, Drake, *Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now*; “History of ACORN,” <http://www.acorn.org/> (last accessed 5/5/2013).

²⁵⁵ Bill Kopsky interview.

their communities for long periods of time.²⁵⁶ This new process of organizing did not happen overnight, of course, but has been one of the most important developments in the Panel's work in the past decade. This focus on strategic planning and improving the overall quality of life in a community has led to long-term, sustainable organizations where the earlier forms of organizing engaged in by the Panel was unable to, and has been at the core of the Panel's success in the last decade.

The third area of planning focused on developing a one-year legislative agenda for the CFC. The CFC decided that members would choose five issues for the agenda. The process for choosing the issues, which is still in place today, is decided through a voting process from coalition members. The coalition is divided into caucuses, seven for issues, three regional, and one for youth members of the CFC. Issue caucuses are agriculture, civil rights, economic justice, environment, educational reform, and public health. The three regional caucuses encompass southeast, southwest, and northwest Arkansas. Roughly eighteen months prior to a legislative session, the regional caucuses convene to discuss issues that may become legislative priorities. Delegates introduce resolutions, those resolutions are referred to an issues caucus, and then the caucuses meet. If an issue receives majority voter approval within the group, it will be referred to the larger convention body for a vote. The accepted nominations are voted on using a weighted voting scale, in which voters rank the issues using a point system. The top ten issues by score become the CFC legislative agenda. The CFC originally focused on five legislative issues, but has since grown to ten.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Bernadette Devone interview.

²⁵⁷ Bill Kopsky interview.

Enacting Legislative Agendas

The CFC outlined a legislative agenda in advance of the 2001 Arkansas General Assembly that focused on five key points for the duration of the legislative session.²⁵⁸

The first issue was the establishment of an Arkansas Department of Agriculture and Farm Sustainability.²⁵⁹ The CFC noted that a Department of Agriculture was important because it could fulfill three major roles - developing, promoting, and diversifying the state's farming sector; coordinating all of the various agencies within the state that were currently regulating the state's agriculture; and representing Arkansas on a national level with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.²⁶⁰ The Panel helped organize the Arkansas Farmers Community Alliance (AFCA) to facilitate the spread of information to members in order to lobby for the creation of a Department of Agriculture within the state.

The second issue of the legislative agenda was the elimination of conflicts of interest from state boards and commissions, which at the time had no regulations. "Current law allows board and commission members to vote on items that affect the financial interests of immediate family members, employers, or clients."²⁶¹ Eliminating conflicts of interest would have allowed citizens of the state to have equal footing in economic decisions being made. The third issue was that government employees had the

²⁵⁸ Since 2000 there have been sixteen sessions of the Arkansas General Assembly. There have been regular sessions every two years from 2001, there were extraordinary sessions in 2000 (two), 2002, 2003 (two), 2006, and 2008 as well as the creation of a fiscal session every other year starting in 2010. For detailed information about each session see:

<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2009/R/Pages/Previous%20Legislatures.aspx> (last accessed 5-4-2013).

²⁵⁹ At the time, Arkansas was one of only two states, the other being New Jersey, that did not have a Department of Agriculture. Public Policy Watch, Winter, 2002, 1.

²⁶⁰ Capek, *A History of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel*.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

ability to collectively bargain wages, hours, and working conditions like workers in the private sector. The fourth priority of the agenda sought stronger penalties on hate crimes. Fifth, the CFC supported legislation that would lead to the Arkansas Renewable Energy Act.²⁶² The act required utility services to use net energy metering that encouraged the use of renewable energy resources and technologies. The piece of legislation lowered administrative costs paid by low usage consumers. The Arkansas Renewable Energy Act was passed and Act 1781 took effect in October 2001.²⁶³

The CFC was successful in the passage of the Arkansas Renewable Energy Act. The rest of the agenda, however, was met with mixed results at the close of the 2001 Legislative Session. A state department of agriculture, supported by only one legislator, was tabled for study until the 2003 legislative session. Conflict of interest and hate crime legislation passed the Senate but failed in the House, while collective bargaining legislation died in committee. The CFC considered the challenges from the legislative session and began to focus on strengthening the coalition.²⁶⁴

Tackling Internal and Legislative Issues

The Panel and the CFC ran into internal challenges while continuing to battle equality issues on its legislative agenda. Two wedge issues occurred that threatened to sever alliances the Panel and the CFC had built within the coalition. Lesbian, Gay,

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Copy of the Arkansas Renewable Energy Development Act of 2001, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²⁶⁴ Capek, *A History of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel*.

Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) equality issues and the proposed consolidation of school districts in Arkansas with less than 1,500 students were two major wedge issues the Panel and the CFC had to overcome.²⁶⁵

The 2004 Arkansas general election ballot gave Arkansans the opportunity to decide on the issue of gay marriage. Amendment 3 stated that marriage consisted of a union of one man and woman and “the legislature [had] the power to determine the capacity of persons to marry...and the legal rights, obligations, privileges, and immunities of marriage.”²⁶⁶ The amendment directly dealt with the Panel and the CFC’s custom of taking on equality issues, therefore one of the member organizations of the coalition requested that the CFC take a position on the ballot initiative. The LGBT equality issue polarized the CFC to the point “the coalition nearly ruptured that day.”²⁶⁷ Leadership of the CFC held the organization together by setting the precedent that all members can come together and discuss differing opinions without jeopardizing other agendas.²⁶⁸

Governor Mike Huckabee proposed school consolidation that affected ninety-nine rural school districts within the state in 2004. Any school district with less than 1,500 students faced consolidation, although the number was eventually reduced to 350.²⁶⁹ The CFC, with a largely rural makeup, opposed the consolidation bill and began lobbying against it. Many Panel donors, a number of whom lived in central Arkansas, were for the

²⁶⁵ Bill Kopsky interview.

²⁶⁶ “Arkansas General Election Results – 2004,” Secretary of State, www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/Documents/Historical (accessed April 15, 2013).

²⁶⁷ Bill Kopsky interview.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Lorna Jimerson, *The Impact of Arkansas’ Act 60 Consolidation on African-American School Leadership and Racial Composition of School Districts*, Rural School and Community Trust, 2005, 2.

consolidation measure and called for the Panel to come out in favor of consolidation in opposition to the CFC. Kopsky's response to those requesting that the Panel support consolidation was to explain that the Panel and the CFC developed a system that allowed the membership to develop and decide on the platforms prior to legislative sessions, and unless an item in the agenda was grossly counter to the Panel's values, the Panel supported the agenda. While some donors and members chose to stop supporting the Panel over the issue, many more remained and let the system in place take its course when creating a legislative agenda.²⁷⁰

The CFC made adjustments to its organizational structure in order to survive future wedge issues within the organization. Its members realized they could not "avoid issues where [they] have sharp differences in opinion, but [could] create an open and inclusive process where [they] can at least have productive discussions to ensure that [CFC] never adopt a position that is counter to our values."²⁷¹ The CFC adopted a two year cycle of planning in order to give more time for internal decisions to be made, instead of making a rushed decision right before a legislative session. It also allowed individuals to opt-out of certain issues, while still feeling empowered to keep working on others.²⁷²

The 2004 agenda of the CFC included continuing efforts for a state department of agriculture, expanded hate crime legislation, and the regulation of conflict of interest voting as in previous years, but also added to its goals education reform and a fair election bill. The fair election legislation sought to enable early voting within the state.

²⁷⁰ Bill Kopsky interview.

²⁷¹ Copy of Diversity, Inclusiveness and Wedge Issues for the CFC, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²⁷² Ibid.

Introduced to the House of Representatives on February 4, 2005, Act 655 was passed on March 7, 2005.²⁷³ The CFC experienced additional success with the passage of an Arkansas Department of Agriculture by Act 1978 in 2005.²⁷⁴

The Panel received much-welcomed news in late 2004. On November 30, the Marguerite Casey Foundation awarded the Panel \$240,000 for the purpose of expanding “the base of activists in low-income and marginalized communities working for education and fiscal policy reforms at the local and state levels.”²⁷⁵ Another grant was received in 2006 from the Black Hall of Fame. Awarding \$30,000 to eleven nonprofits, the Panel was among those benefiting from this grant to “develop programs and projects aimed at helping [African American] communities.”²⁷⁶

Examining Achievement Gap

The year 2004 was an important time for the educational system throughout the state. The Panel and CFC sought to highlight and address a gap in educational performance between white, middle class students and almost every other demographic, particularly African Americans.²⁷⁷ The group Arkansans for Excellence in Education (AEE) formed in order to study and lobby on behalf of students in order to address the inequality that members felt existed in education. AEE adopted a platform and discussed five key points, including the setting of higher academic standards. The attainment of higher standards in the classroom, gave “every school a chance to meet those [higher]

²⁷³ *Public Policy Watch*, Spring, 2004, 2.

²⁷⁴ Copy of Accomplishments of the Arkansas Citizens First Congress, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²⁷⁵ Marguerite Casey Foundation, “2004 Grantees Awarded,” <http://caseygrants.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/2004granteearchive.pdf>, (last accessed 5/19/13).

²⁷⁶ *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, July 19, 2006.

²⁷⁷ Arkansas Public Policy Panel, *The Achievement Gap in Arkansas – A Progress Report and Action Plan*, 2006, 1, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

standards and not [consolidate] schools based on an arbitrary minimum number.”²⁷⁸ AEE also supported a sharing of the tax burden for the purpose of reforming the educational system in a fair manner “among all income and business groups, and raising adequate revenue to fund the needed reforms, including preschool for low income kids.”²⁷⁹

Its agenda additionally involved the increase of accountability from the Arkansas Department of Education and the raising of teacher salaries. The last key point brought to the 2005 legislative session included the “fair distribution of resources to schools, with extra funding for schools in high poverty areas to help close the achievement gaps between rich and poor.”²⁸⁰

The work the Panel did to address the achievement gap in education received the attention of the Babcock Foundation. It had previously given organizational development grants to the Panel, but it took a more involved approach with the achievement gap issue. With the help of the Babcock Foundation, AEE, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF), the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Clinton School of Public Service, Hendrix College, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Norman Foundation, the Southern Partners Fund, and hundreds of private donors, support was in place to research and publish a study on the education gap in the state.²⁸¹ In 2005, *The Arkansas Achievement Gap: Unequal Opportunities* was published. David L. Rickard, a research analyst, prepared the report for the Panel. The achievement gap publication was a seminal report, based on data from the Arkansas Benchmark Exam. It concluded that,

²⁷⁸ Arkansas Public Policy Panel, “The State of Education in Arkansas: Reforming Arkansas Public Schools – a Grassroots Approach,” *Public Policy Watch*, Spring, 2004.

²⁷⁹ . Arkansas Public Policy Panel, The State of Education in Arkansas. Unprocessed Panel Papers.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Cynthia Howell, “Study Keys on 9 Ways Schools Can Narrow Gap,” *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, February 2, 2008.

“the racial and income achievement gaps in Arkansas are extremely severe.”²⁸² Rickard’s research found a large and persistent gap between white students on one hand, and African American, Latino, and economically disadvantaged students on the other.²⁸³

Rickard studied the correlation between social, racial, and cultural backgrounds in data provided by examining Advanced Placement (AP), Gifted and Talented (GT) programs, and scrutiny of dropout data, a severe achievement gap between white, African American, and Latino students was confirmed. African American and Latino students were underrepresented in AP and GT programs, while white and Asian students were overrepresented. Rickard also found that African American students were overrepresented in suspension, expulsion, and dropout rates, and scored fifteen to twenty percent below Arkansas’ average on the American College Test (ACT). These studies led a final recommendation of smaller class sizes, health clinics based in schools, and better after-school and summer programs for students.²⁸⁴

Gaining Legislative Strength

The Panel and the CFC’s agenda for the 2007 legislative session continued with their overall goal of combating inequality and injustice by addressing several issues. The achievement gap in education, a social phenomenon not restricted to Arkansas, remained a priority. The CFC’s 2007 agenda included the closure of the education achievement gap by the expansion of Pre-K programs for low-income children. A renewed focus on the CFC’s agenda included the continuation of the reformation of the Arkansas tax system for

²⁸² Howell, *Study Keys on 9 Ways Schools Can Narrow Gap*.

²⁸³ David L. Rickard, “The Arkansas Achievement Gap: Unequal Opportunities,” 2005, <http://bit.ly/10SYxbB> (last accessed 5/13/13).

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

the purpose of creating a fairer environment for low and middle-income families. Third on the new agenda was the protection of the environment by an official recognition of global warming as a real threat. A fourth item called for the reformation of Arkansas' process of prison sentencing by having the state make available alternatives to long-term incarceration for non-violent offenders. The fifth issue on the agenda included the creation of an Arkansas AIDS/HIV Minority Task Force to address a perception that AIDS/HIV affected minority communities at a high rate.

The CFC achieved five policy victories after the 2007 session, including the first action in Arkansas that addressed global warming. Act 696 created a Global Warming Commission in September 2007 to study climate change. The CFC lobbied the Arkansas State Legislature to declare global warming "an urgent threat" and challenged lawmakers to "set goals of reducing the state's carbon emissions back to 1990 levels by 2020."²⁸⁵

Seventy percent of all children in Arkansas from a low-income family could attend Pre-K after the 2007 session.²⁸⁶ Other victories included a fifty percent cut of the grocery tax and a modification of income tax brackets that benefitted lower- to middle-income families. Additionally, the AIDS/HIV Minority Task Force was created. This task force found that while African Americans made up only sixteen percent of the state population in 2007, they accounted for thirty-eight percent of AIDS and forty-one percent

²⁸⁵ Steve Keese, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, February 14, 2007.

²⁸⁶ Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, Annual Report 2007, <http://www.aradvocates.org/assets/PDFs/AACFAnnualReportsSmall.pdf> (accessed 5/13/13).

of HIV cases in the state.²⁸⁷ Finally, the legislature created a system of non-adversarial drug courts that focused on moving offenders into strenuous treatment facilities and programs rather than into prisons.²⁸⁸

The CFC's process of establishing an agenda had become firmly established by the late 2000s. Regional caucuses funneling issues into issues caucuses and then introducing those to the larger CFC body was a very successful legislative model for the group and continues to be one going forward. The success of the process seems as important as the issues as it shows how progressive Arkansans can come together and fight for issues they think are important.

Organizing Gould

The CFC continued to lobby for its legislative agenda, while the Panel assisted and trained many coalitions across the state. The Panel worked in different communities throughout the state, but the community organizing efforts in Gould stand out as one of its finest success stories. Located in southeast Arkansas, Gould is a small rural town with a large African American community. The city was nearly bankrupt in 2004, owing over \$250,000 to the IRS, possessed a substandard water system, and suffered from a corrupt city council. To combat these issues, the Gould Citizens Advisory Council (GCAC) was organized in 2003 with the help of the Panel.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Arkansas HIV/AIDS Minority Task Force, *Executive Summary and Final Report*, http://www.arminorityhealth.com/pdf/hiv_executive_summary.pdf (accessed 5/10/13).

²⁸⁸ Arkansas Judiciary, "What is the Division of Drug Courts?" <https://courts.arkansas.gov/courts/circuit-courts/drug-court-programs> (accessed 5/10/13).

²⁸⁹ Citizens First Congress, "Gould Citizens Advisory Council," <http://citizensfirst.org/about-us/member-groups/gould-citizens-advisory-council.html> (accessed 5/3/13).

Lloyd Parks, mayor of Gould, contacted the Panel in 2003 interested in working with the Panel to conduct strategic planning regarding the town. The Panel agreed, but told Parks that as the mayor, the possibility existed that he might be exposed to criticism as community members examined Gould critically. Parks wanted the process to continue and invited the Panel to Gould. Community members became concerned after three months with the work Parks was doing as mayor. Parks felt threatened and asked the Panel to leave the town. As a group that works by invitation only, it complied.²⁹⁰

Essie Mae Cableton, an alderman in Gould, called Devone and requested that the Panel return. Devone met with members of the community and GCAC formed. Curtis Mangrum was elected chair at the first meeting of the group.²⁹¹ GCAC then underwent the Panel's strategic planning process in 2004, enabling its members to begin identifying problems within their community. GCAC went door to door attempting to recruit members. It cleaned up the public streets and became a presence at city council and school board meetings. GCAC combined forces with the Panel and lobbied unsuccessfully against school consolidation that same year. Nonetheless, the group carried on with an increased knowledge of public policy campaigns.²⁹²

GCAC approached its state representative to introduce a bill that required the preservation of records of closed schools. This led to Gould's school trophies being put on display in the halls of Dumas' schools, with which the district Gould merged. A second bill soon followed which made it easier for empty school buildings to be transferred to the city. The building that once served as the school in Gould now serves as

²⁹⁰ Bill Kopsky interview.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Citizens First Congress, *Gould Citizens Advisory Council*.

the town's community center.²⁹³ Gould began to identify larger problems following these successes, such as a water delivery and treatment system that was graded as sixty percent deteriorated. Additionally, the town faced bankruptcy due to \$250,000 in back taxes owed to the IRS.²⁹⁴

GCAC realized the only way to achieve equality and change was through a functioning city government. It nominated seven candidates with a progressive mindset for public office with six candidates winning seats. The success of this election showed citizens that the GCAC could put people in office who were genuinely concerned about the welfare of Gould.²⁹⁵ The IRS struck a deal with the new city council members regarding the \$250,000 in back taxes: if the city remained up to date with current and future taxes the debt would be completely forgiven.²⁹⁶ GCAC also persuaded city council members to raise the water rates and invest in a new water system infrastructure.²⁹⁷

The city council members succeeded in improving the city during their terms, but the time and commitment necessary to implement social change was overwhelming. Many of the council members did not seek reelection in 2010.²⁹⁸ As a result, new individuals ran for the council, including two legally ineligible participants that were elected. These new city council members were not concerned with the needs of Gould or its citizens, but rather their own personal agenda, which included disrupting the work of GCAC. The mayor was stripped of his powers and an ordinance banned him from

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Bernadette Devone interview.

²⁹⁶ Max Brantley, "City of Gould Deals with IRS on Tax Liability," *Arkansas Times*, <http://www.arktimes.com/ArkansasBlog/archives/2011/11/02/good-news-in-gould-tax-difficulties.html>, (accessed 5/3/15).

²⁹⁷ Citizens First Congress, *Gould Citizens Advisory Council*.

²⁹⁸ Bernadette Devone interview.

meeting with any groups without the permission of the city council. Additionally, an ordinance was passed that forbade the GCAC from meeting within the city limits. These ordinances prevented the GCAC and the mayor from joining forces for the betterment of Gould. The citizens of Gould attempted to regain control of their town. GCAC took the two improperly seated council members (one was a convicted felon and the other not a member of the ward) to court and after two years of litigation they were removed from the city council in July 2012.²⁹⁹

The 2012 city council election was a victory for the GCAC and the Panel. The GCAC's candidates won every seat on the city council and city treasurer by a landslide. The city of Gould with the help of GCAC and the Panel began to focus its energy on improving the quality of life for its citizens.³⁰⁰

The Panel and GCAC provided the citizens of Gould a way to take part in the community decision-making process. News of the victory in Gould spread quickly and “more citizens in other communities are seeing what’s possible when citizens are committed to moving their city forward.”³⁰¹ For its efforts in organizing the city of Gould, GCAC was awarded the Dragon Slayer Award by the CFC at its convention in 2008.³⁰² Gould became an example to other communities. The success of the GCAC depicted how grassroots organizing could lead to change in a community, and how local leaders could lead their town out of political and economic turmoil without relying on others.

²⁹⁹ “2012: A Landmark Year for Organizing South Arkansas,” *Public Policy Watch*, Winter 2013.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² Arkansas Citizens First Congress, "Past Dragon Slayer Awardees," <http://citizensfirst.org/get-involved/cfc-convention/past-dragon-slayer-awardees/?searchterm=dragon> (last accessed 05/17/13).

The work of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel and Arkansas Citizens First Congress has created a web of networks across the state. These networks address issues regarding agriculture, economic justice, education, the environment, and civil rights and social justice.³⁰³ The Panel's support of grassroots organizing on the local level and the CFC's aggressive lobbying approach on the state level has created a successful system for Arkansans to become involved in local and state government. The Panel and the CFC have mobilized thousands of grassroots volunteers across the State of Arkansas. The organizing success of the Panel led to the accomplishment of election reforms, passage of the Arkansas Renewable Energy Act, the creation of an Arkansas Department of Agriculture, and other legislative victories. The Panel has transformed over the past fifty years, but has always fought equality injustices on behalf of the citizens of Arkansas.

³⁰³ Accomplishments of the Arkansas Citizens First Congress, Unprocessed Panel Papers.

Conclusion

Brownie Ledbetter passed away in March 2010, leaving behind a legacy of over fifty years of working for progressive change in Arkansas. A fearless leader, Ledbetter spent much of her life working to bring Arkansans together to build a better, and more just future. To many, she is synonymous with the Arkansas Public Policy Panel and the Citizens First Congress and will forever be remembered for her leadership.

Many organizations do not survive the departure of their founder, but the Panel continues to work for that same progressive change Ledbetter sought. The structure and success of the Panel is such that it is not dependent on one leader for its continued existence. By the time of Ledbetter's retirement in 1999, the Panel was having success with its grassroots organizing and building leadership in local communities, and has continued to grow and create a more defined structure.

Activists continue to be recognized by the CFC through the Dragon Slayer Award, given every other year at the CFC convention. Beatrice Shelby received the award in 2010 for her work with the Boys, Girls, and Adults Community Development Center in Marvell. This year, Joyce Hale received the Dragon Slayer Award for her commitment to activism in the state and her current work regarding natural gas issues and hydraulic fracturing taking place in northwest Arkansas. This award continues to celebrate and honor those working in Arkansas to bring about social and economic justice whose efforts are too often forgotten.

Since 2010, the Panel has continued to grow in much the same fashion as it did during the 2000s. With its strategic planning in place, the Panel continues to expand its presence in local communities, through training leaders and helping these grassroots groups set their goals and agenda. However, the Panel receives far more requests for help than they are able to assist, a sign that their work is in demand and that grassroots organizations are spreading across the state.

The CFC has maintained the same structure since its creation in 1999. This past legislative session was a new test for the CFC, as it was the first Republican-controlled Legislature since Reconstruction. In preparation for this, and in part due to the importance of a number of packages the CFC lobbied for, the organization contracted lobbyists for the first time. Previously, the CFC has contracted staff from the Panel and relied on interns for much of its work during the legislative sessions. The 2013 Legislative Session was the first in which the CFC hired outside lobbyists to lobby on its behalf in the hope that their knowledge and experience would increase the effectiveness in the legislature. Ken Smith and Richard Hutchinson were both successful in shepherding many of the bills they were responsible to passage. For the CFC, the stakes became a lot higher during the 2013 legislative session because conservative ideals can differ so much from the progressive background of the CFC, especially in terms of budget, women's rights, and marriage equality.

The Panel published a report in February 2012, *Ripe for Reform*.³⁰⁴ This thirty-three page report looks at the history of progressive change in Arkansas and analyzes the states' political culture, electoral patterns, public opinion, and progressive change, among other issues and data. The report, proof that the Panel is moving toward its goal of social and economic justice in the state, is also a warning that as politics becomes more polarized, organizations working for progressive change need to remain bi-partisan in order to remain effective at lobbying the legislature.

Moving forward, the Panel and CFC hope to continue organizing and lobbying for the advancement of progressive ideals across the state of Arkansas. A major focus going forward is an emphasis on voter education. Raising voter awareness of candidates and issues will only serve to strengthen the state of Arkansas by making candidates be accountable for their knowledge and support of issues.

The Panel, in its fifty year history, has shown its ability to adapt to the current needs of Arkansans and structure its organization to fit their needs. From a women's group that wanted to create an space for open dialogue regarding inequality and prejudice, to an organization intent on reforming the tax code in Arkansas to lessen the burden on the lower classes, to today, two organizations that seek to involve Arkansans in the public policy making process through a network of progressive organizations, the Panel has always fought for social and economic justice. The Panel grows from strength to strength, willing to adapt to changing circumstances, and as it becomes a household name in the state, it will continue working towards its mission.

³⁰⁴ Jay Barth, *Ripe for Reform: Arkansas as a Model for Social Change*, (Little Rock: Arkansas Public Policy Panel, 2012), available at: <http://arpanel.org/policy/reports/ripe-for-reform-2> (last accessed 5/19/2013).

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Appendix B: Literature Review

Writing a narrative history of any institution requires an extensive review of available literature in order to gain an appreciation of the people, events, and places of importance to that group. This project reviewed literature related to many different groups to gain a full understanding of the nearly fifty-year history of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel (the Panel). Primary and secondary sources built a historical structure on which a narrative examining those people, events, and places that have impacted the Panel was constructed.

Two separate groups of papers made up the bulk of primary source material used to analyze the history of the group. The archives of the Panel of American Women (PAW), donated in part to the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies and Special Collections at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. The PAW papers account for much of the early years of the Panel, especially those in chapters two and three, and largely contain correspondence and meeting minutes, in addition to information about programs being enacted in schools. The Panel's own archives, donated to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's Center for Arkansas History and Culture, make up a large portion of the materials used for the historical analysis of the Panel in chapters three, four, and five. The collection, currently unprocessed, contains policy reviews, Board meeting minutes, scrapbooks, photos, annual reports, grant applications, and various publications produced by the Panel. Some of these items, like policy reviews, scrapbooks, photos, and the publications of the Panel give insight into the work and policy issues the Panel and its

network of organizations around the state were doing. The Board minutes, annual reports, and grant applications provide an understanding of the day-to-day operations and financial status of the Panel over time.

Newsletters and newspapers also proved critical in a review of primary literature. Articles from the *The Arkansas Gazette*, *The Arkansas Democrat*, and the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, provide important state and national context for the work the Panel was and is involved in. Additionally, the Panel's *Public Policy Watch* was instrumental in determining the priorities of the Panel over time.

Secondary sources allowed for the collected primary sources to be examined within a larger social and historical context, especially within the confines of chapter one, where the reasons for PAW even existing must be examined. To that end, certain books proved invaluable. Sara Murphy's *Breaking the Silence: Little Rock's Women's Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools, 1958-1963*, provided a history of the precursor to PAW, the Women's Emergency Committee. John Kirk's *Redefining the Color Line: Black Activism in Little Rock, 1940-1970*, provided an examination of civil rights in Little Rock and the social conditions of the time. Articles for the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* also provided information into the unique racial situation of Little Rock in the late 1950s and 1960s. Stella Capek's unpublished manuscript, *A History of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel*, was also a tremendous help as it helped to define and show the thread of equality that the Panel has worked on for so long now.

Additionally, websites were a very valuable source of information for the project. The Panel's own website, www.arpanel.org, contains a large amount of historical information, as well as links to *Public Policy Watch*, the Citizens First Congress, and other organizations around the state that are linked with the Panel.

Although not literature, it is important to note that the project relied heavily on collected oral histories gathered from members of the Panel stretching across the fifty-year history of the group. These oral histories add a human touch to the collected information about the Panel's work, as well as fleshing out information where little written evidence existed.

Appendix C: Timeline

1954

The *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision overturned 'separate but equal' laws mandated by *Plessy v. Ferguson* and declared that separate schools for African Americans and whites were unconstitutional.

1957

Nine African American students were prevented entry to Central High when Governor Orval Faubus ordered the National Guard to surround the school.

1958

Gov. Faubus signed pro-segregation legislation that allowed him to close any school under specified circumstances. This law was used to close LRSD's four high schools.

Fifty-eight women met and formed the WEC in response the school closings in Little Rock. WEC began planning how to reopen the schools in LRSD.

1959

The Lost Year came to a close and LRSD's schools reopened and began working towards integration.

1960

Murphy and Ledbetter began working with COCA for the election of the Little Rock School Board members.

1963

WEC voted for the disbandment of the organization. Former WEC members and others formed PAW.

Panel presentations were planned for PAW's diverse membership of women regarding their experiences with inequality.

PAW held its first panel in Little Rock, Arkansas at the Westover Hills Presbyterian Church.

1964-1967

PAW's membership grew and the organization became involved with other groups, civic organizations, and the education system.

1969

The first public school workshop conducted by PAW was held at Pulaski Heights Junior High.

PAW changed its format away from panel presentations and sought to create a more structured organizational model. PAW members began researching funding sources and trained panelists to work with school children.

1970

PAW members began to focus more on schools to address issues of inequality and injustice.

1971

School busing is implemented to satisfy integration efforts but many were dissatisfied.

PAW incorporated into a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization.

PAW began working with teachers, students, and parents to better the public schools in LRSD.

PAW began receiving grants from the Emergency School Aid Program.

PAW began using the Green Circle Program in LRSD.

1972

Emergency School Aid Act of 1972 created a program, referred to as the ESAA that made federal funding available.

PAW participated in the Little Rock and North Little Rock ESAA Coalition when it joined the YWCA, the Arkansas Council on Human Relations, and the Urban League of Greater Little Rock.

1973

Ledbetter served on the National Women's Political Caucus as the first Political Action Chair.

Due to its expansion, PAW hired part-time and full-time staff paid from HEW grant under ESAA.

Ledbetter served as coordinator of the Affirmative Action Committee for the Arkansas State Democratic Party.

1974

PAW participated in the Classroom Community Council along with the Design Cooperative of Arkansas and the Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association.

Ledbetter again served as coordinator of the Affirmative Action Committee for the Arkansas State Democratic Party.

1976

Ledbetter took a leave of absence from PAW to help her husband with his congressional campaign.

Ledbetter organized a group of women who were married to legislators. This group worked to inform the general public on various legislative activities.

1977

Sex Role Stereotyping project proposal submitted to the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

1978

PAW suggested for the implementation of an affirmation action plan for the LRSD.

1979

The History Book Project was initiated to create a more balanced textbook of Arkansas history to be used in the public school system.

1980

The Panel of American Women changed its name to the Little Rock Panel, Inc. (LRP).

Federal guidelines changes regarding ESAA grants kept organizations like LRP from receiving grant money as it had in the previous decade.

1981-1982

LRP members independently focused their efforts toward school board elections while the organization maintained a low profile.

1981

The Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 enacted a collective decrease in federal income tax rates among Americans, allowed for small businesses to receive tax incentives, and lowered estate taxes, among other tax cuts. The tax initiatives from this act cost the U.S. Treasury approximately \$750 billion over the next five years.

1982

LRP moved its headquarters to the Hall Building on West Capitol in Little Rock.

1983

Due to unequal resources among the school districts, the financing procedure for public schools was declared unconstitutional by the Arkansas Supreme Court. A one-cent sales tax was passed to raise money for school programs but the measure did not achieve this goal.

Another sales tax regarding new school funding allocation standards determined by the Arkansas Supreme Court was passed in the state.

The Arkansas Fairness Council (AFC) was created as the public policy fighting arm of the organization of LRP. AFC lobbied on legislative issues, largely tax reform, during the 1980s.

1985

The Arkansas General Assembly ordered for tougher standards in Arkansas's schools. During the 1980s, the state was ranked at Forty-fourth in the United States and nearly fifty percent of Arkansans were without a high school diploma.

LRP began the Arkansas Public Policy Project, which was created to conduct research and disseminate the information to the public. The goal of the Project was to increase public knowledge on the public policy process and increase public activity in the legislative process.

1986

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA) reduced the tax brackets from fourteen to five and helped to broaden the income tax base, making this act the most comprehensive tax reform to date.

“The Arkansas Public Policy Project, Analysis of Arkansas Sales Tax Exemptions,” report published.

1987

LRP moved its headquarters to the Boyle Building on West Capitol in Little Rock. This space was shared with other organizations Ledbetter was involved with, such as Arkansas Career Resources (ACR).

The “Analysis of Alternatives for Increasing Arkansas Revenues” report was produced out of the Excellence in Education Program (EEP). This report outlined Arkansas’s economic issues.

The organization changed its name from the Little Rock Panel, Inc., to Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Inc.

1990

Panel members went out to see the level of interest for a statewide appeal for an environmental issues campaign.

Vertac Chemical Plant and the burn of dioxin became an environmental issue the Panel addressed.

1991

The Panel formed a new Board with twelve board members through mail ballot.

1992

Panel commissioned an Environmental Policy Institute at Camp Aldersgate.

1993

The Panel developed a loose network of statewide grassroots groups and organizations.

A statewide conference of twenty-eight grassroots groups and local organizations led to the Panel designing the Public Interest Support Center project to link new groups to one another.

1994

The Panel began the Delta Project, providing Arkansans in southern part of the state with a voice regarding the political process.

The Panel developed a three-year plan to design a Public Interest Support Center to conduct research and provide information to groups on the issues of which they were concerned.

1995

Pine Bluff Arsenal and the planned building of an incinerator at this site became an environmental issue the Panel addressed.

The Arkansas Watershed Alliance formed out of the PISC project to address the chip mill industry.

1995/1996

The Panel began to examine consumer protection issues.

1996

The first issue of the *Policy Watch* was published.

Bill Kopsky began working for the Panel.

1997

The Panel held a rally at the Little Rock Capitol regarding opposition to the Takings Bill.

1998

The Citizens First Congress is formed and becomes the lobbying arm of the Panel.

1999

Ledbetter retires as the Panel's executive director though remained active with the organization.

The Boyle Building closed and the Panel purchased the Progressive House.

The Panel is awarded a grant from the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation.

2000

The Panel received funding for ten VISTA members.

The Panel adopted a more formal strategic planning process by establishing agendas for the legislative sessions.

2001

Citizens First Congress outlined an agenda of five key points for the 2001 Arkansas General Assembly.

CFC supported the Arkansas Renewable Energy Act, which took effect in October 2001.

2002

The Panel and CFC prepare a new agenda for the 2003 legislative session.

2003

The Panel helped to organize the Gould Citizens Advisory Council to help the small rural town with various issues.

2004

Governor Huckabee proposed school consolidation of ninety-nine schools districts in rural areas of Arkansas.

The Panel was awarded a grant from the Marguerite Casey Foundation.

The Panel and CFC addressed the education achievement gap in Arkansas, leading to the formation of the Arkansans for Excellence in Education.

2005

A report titled *The Arkansas Achievement Gap: Unequal Opportunities* was prepared for the Panel.

Act 1978 was passed and established an Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

Fair election legislation to enable early voting was passed under Act 655.

2006

The Panel was awarded a grant from the Black Hall of Fame.

2007

The Panel was successful with five polices after the 2007 legislative session.

2012

GCAC and the Panel were successful with Gould's city council landslide election of new council members.

Appendix D: Acronym Listing

AACF	Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
ACHR	Arkansas Council on Human Relations
ACORN	Association of Community Organization for Reform Now
ACT	American College Test
AEE	Arkansans for Excellence in Education
AFC	Arkansas Fairness Council
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
AP	Advanced Placement
CADV	Coalition Against Domestic Violence
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response
CFC	Citizens First Congress
COCA	Council on Community Affairs
CTA	Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association
ECA	Environmental Congress of Arkansas
EEP	Excellence in Education Program
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERTA	Economic Recovery Tax Act
ESAA	Emergency School Aid Act
ESAP	Emergency School Assistance Program
GT	Gifted and Talented
GCAC	Gould Citizens Advisory Council
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender

LRP	Little Rock Panel, Inc.
LRSD	Little Rock School District
LRU	Little Rock University
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PAW	Panel of American Women
Panel	Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Inc.
PBA	Pine Bluff Arsenal
PERG	Project for Equity, Representation, and Governance
PISC	Public Interest Support Center
Project	Arkansas Public Policy Project
TRA	Tax Reform Act of 1986
UALR	University of Arkansas at Little Rock
U.S	United States
VISTA	Volunteers in Service to America
WEC	Women's Emergency Committee to Open our Schools
WRF	Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

Appendix E: Known Members of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel

Below are lists containing names of members from throughout the history of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel. They are not exhaustive but an indication of what was found in the primary documents located at the Arkansas Studies Institute.

Panel of American Women, 1960s

Sara Murphy, founder	Mary Heil
Jeanne Gallman Akins	Dorisene Hill
Carolyn P. Baker	Ada Hollingsworth
Anne Bartley	Dortha Jo Jackson
Irma Hunter Brown	Belynda Ford Jeffries
Rose Cone	Rachel Alline Myers Jones
Nelwyn Davis	Ellen Kaufman
Rose Douglas	Alice Korenblat
Charlotte Gadberry	Carol Taylor Martine
Joan Garner	Susan May
Liz Gaston	Clarice Miller
Jean Gordon	Mabel Mitchell
Mary Snider Griffin	Blanche Moore

Beth Rule Nyhus

Beth Glancy

Barbara L. Phillips

Janet Beck

Bobbi Pitts

Kathryn Lambright

Nan Selz

Brownie Ledbeter

Lottie Shackelford

Catherine Eckford

Margaret Snider

Jane Mendel

Raida Snyderman

Sister Thomas Desales

Evelyn Soo

Sandra Green

Joyce Sparks

Christine McDonald

Lillian Springer

Mabel Milton

Shirley Strauss

Martha Bass

Joanna Sutton

Ruth Kretchmar

Mildred Terry

Connie Obsitnik

Gwen Wetzel

Glenna Presley

Jane Williams

Gwen Rile

Joyce Williams

Faustenia Bomar

Pat Youngdahl

Clara Draper

Joan Campbell

Panel of American Women, 1970s

Panel Roster Active Members,

Bobbie Mann

December 28, 1972

Sara Murphy

Anne Bartley

Barbara Phillips

Janet Beck

Louise Rost

Nan Brown

Beth Rule

Virginia Ann Eckford

Gwen Sheffield

Joan Chowning

Sue Smith

Rose Douglass

Liz Smith

Catherine Eckford

Raida Snyderman

Jeanne Gallman Akins

Joyce Sparks

Jean Gordon

Joyce Sparks

Susan Gray

Joyce Springer

Mary Heil

Mildred Terry

Vickie Houston

Pat Youndahl

Alice Korenblat

Board of Directors, 1974

Brownie Ledbeter

Joyce Springer

Joan Campbell	Betty Brooks
Alice Korenblat	Joan Campbell
Mary Heil	Mike Fixler
Sara Murphy	Jeanne Gallman Akins
Elizabeth Smith	Diana Glaze
Mildred Terry	Ruthe Kaplan
<u>Staff, 1974</u>	Kathryn Lambright
Beth Rule	Cora McHenry
Carolyn Baker	Mable Mictchel
Brownie Ledbetter	Jim Parsley
Belynda Jeffries	Bobbi Prior
Brenda Cowan	Beth Rule
Marilyn Lee	Lottie Shackelford
<u>Board of Directors, Unknown Year</u>	Daisy Smith
<u>(After 1975)</u>	Elizabeth Smih
Carolyn Baker	Gwendolyn Smith
Anne Bartley	Raida Snyderman
Elsie Black	Joyce Springer

Board of Directors, Unknown Year

(After 1977)

Carolyn Baker

Anne Bartley

Elsie Black

Betty Brooks

Mike Fixler

Jeanne Gallman Akins

Diana Glaze

Cora McHenry

Mable Mitchell

Jim Parsley

Lottie Shackelford

Daisy Smith

Elizabeth Smith

Gwendowlyn Smith

Raida Snyderman

Staff, Unknown Year (After 1977)

Brownie Ledbetter

Donita Hudspeth

Bobbie James

Deborah Cooper

Paty Kell

Rosa Ford

Susie Steinnes

Tina Turner

Board of Directors, Unknown Year

Carolyn Baker

Anne Bartley

Eleanor Coleman

Diana Glaze

Kay Goss

Wendell Griffin

Fran Henderson

Ada Hollingsworth

Mike Fixler

Judy Kane

Brady Gadberry

Sandra Kurijaka

Diana Glaze

Kathryn Lambright

Kay Goss

Brownie Ledbeter

Wendell Griffin

Cora McHenry

Fran Henderson

Deborah Mathis

Ada Hollingsworth

Mable Mitchell

Judy Kane

Bobbi Prior

Sandra Kurijaka

Beth Rule

Kathryn Lambright

Lottie Shackelford

Sallie Lewis

Dr. John Schell

Cora McHenry

Raida Snyderman

Deborah Mathis

Pat West

Mable Mitchell

Board of Directors, 1980

Bobbi Prior

Carolyn Baker

Murray Poller

Anne Bartley

Beth Rule

Eleanor Coleman

Raida Snyderman

Vashti Varnado

Debra Penn

Pat West

Donita Hudspeth

Gwendoln Wetzel

Deborah Cooper

Pat Youngdahl

Patty Kelly

Staff, 1980

Faye Russ

Brownie Ledbetter

Kathleen Schoultz

C Kitty Dozier

Marie Jordan

Doris Harrison

Little Rock Panel, Inc, 1980s

Executive Committee, 1980

Dorris Harrison

Joan Campbell

Debra Penn

Sue Maddison

Donita Hudspeth

Jeanne Gallman Akins

Board of Directors, 1980

Lottie Shackelford

Carolyn Baker

Joyce Springer

Anne Bartley

Staff, 1980

Eleanor Coleman

Brownie Ledbetter

Mike Fixler

C. Kitty Dozier

Brady Gadberry

Diana Glaze

Vashti Varnado

Kathryn Lambright

Kay Goss

Sallie Lewis

Wendell Griffin

Cora McHenry

Fran Henderson

Deborah Mathis

Ada Hollingsworth

Mable Mitchell

Judy Kane

Bobbi Prior

Sandra Kurijaka

Murray Poller

Pat West

Beth Rule

Gwendolyn Wetzel

Raida Snyderman

Pat Youngdahl

Arkansas Public Policy Project, 1980s

1986

Faye Russ

Patti Webb

Kathleen Schoultz

Deborah Cooper

Marie Jordan

Patty Kelly

Arkansas Public Policy Panel, 1990s

Board Members, 1991

Brownie Ledbetter

Jim Lynch

Dr. Stella Capek

Patty Frase	Patty Frase
Howard Goggans	Calvin King
Calvin King	Tom McGowan
Grainger Ledbetter	E.J. Miller
Tom McGowan	Hurlon Ray
Bruce McMath	Bettye Ann Cooper
E. J. Miller	<u>Board Members, 1995</u>
Hurlon Ray	Bob Lakey
Ray West	Elene Murray
<u>Board Members, 1992</u>	Dr. Stella Capek
Jim Lynch	Ellen Hansen
Brownie Ledbetter	Fay Knox
Howard Goggans	Calvin King
Dr. Stella Capek	David Druding
Grainger Ledbetter	Robert Leflar
Ron Burnett	John Paschal
Ray West	Alvah Griggs
Jerry Cronin	Barbara Hartsell

Dianne Longinotti	Ray West
Ken Smith	Sherry Balkenhol
Bettye Ann Cooper	H. O. Gray
Hurlon Ray	Brainard Bevins
Jim Lynch	Evelyn Yates
Howard Goggans	Linda Polk
Dale Charles	Ron Burnett
Glenda Cooper	Al Brooks
Bobbie Graves	Betty Strickland
Barry Haas	<u>Staff, 1995</u>
Grainger Ledbetter	Brownie Ledbetter
Tom McGowan	Dan Pless
Bruce McMath	Celestine Wesley
E.J. Miller	Yvonne Evans
Dave Minnis	Bridget Tate
Richard Petty	Charles Shipp
Al Porter	Jake Edwards
Mary Weeks	<u>Board of Directors, Undated</u>

Jim Lynch

Fay Knox

Howard Goggans

Rev. H.O. Gray

Grainger Ledbetter

Sherry Balkenhol

Robert Leflar

Brainard Blevins

Dianne Longinotti

Al Brooks

Tom McGowan

Ron Burnett

Bruce McMath

Stella Capek

E.J. Miller

Dale Charles

Dave Minnis

Glenda Cooper

Elene Murray

David Druding

John Paschal

Bobbie Graves

Richard Petty

Alvah Griggs

Al Porter

Barry Haas

Hurlon Ray

Ellen Hansen

Ken Smith

Barbara Hartsell

Betty Strickland

Perry Hayes

Mary Weeks

Calvin King

Ray West

Evelyn Yates

Barbara Hartsell

Perry Hayes

Board of Directors, Undated

Janice Judy

Jim Lynch

Calvin King

Rev. H.O. Gray

Fay Knox

Howard Goggans

Grainger Ledbetter

Sherry Balkenhol

Robert Leflar

Brainard Blevins

Diane Longinotti

Al Brooks

Tom McGowan

Stella Capek

Bruce McMath

Dale Charles

E.J. Miller

Glenda Cooper

Dave Minnis

David Druding

Elene Murray

Fredrick Freeman

Richard Petty

Bobbie Graves

Linda Polk

Alvah Griggs

Al Porter

Barry Haas

Hurlon Ray

Ellen Hansen

Dave Reagan

Ken Smith

Ray West

Betty Strickland

Evelyn Yates

Mary Weeks

Arkansas Public Policy Panel, 2000s

Board Members, 2000

Jim Lynch

Elene Murray

Howard Goggans

Calvin King

Dale Charles

Stella Capek

Melba Collins

Beatrice Burnett

Glenda Cooper

Marilyn Lynch

Barry Haas

David Druding

Grainger Ledbetter

Robert Leflar

Tom McGowan

Janice Judy

Bruce McMath

Fredrick Freeman

E.J. Miller

Andre Stephens

Dave Minnis

Barbara Hartsell

Barbara Niess

Dave Reagan

Al Porter

Carl & Gail Hillis

Mary Weeks

Nan Devries

Dave Reagan

Ina Young

Carl & Gail Hillis

Perry Hayes

Dale Charles

H.O. Gray

Melba Collins

Brainard Bivens

Glenda Cooper

Evelyn Yates

Barry Haas

Linda Polk

Grainger Ledbetter

Jimmy Martin

Tom McGowan

Al Brooks

Bruce McMath

Betty Strickland

E.J. Miller

Board Members, 2001

Dave Minnis

Calvin King

Barbara Niess

Stella Capek

Al Porter

Beatrice Burnett

Mary Weeks

Robert Leflar

Nan Devries

Janice Judy

Perry Hayes

Fredrick Freeman

H.O. Gray*

Andre Stephens

Linda Polk

Jimmy Martin

Bruce McMath

Al Brooks

E.J. Miller

Board Members, 2002

Dave Minnis

Calvin King

Barbara Niess

Stella Capek

Al Porter

Beatrice Burnett

Mary Weeks

Robert Leflar

Board Members, 2004

Janice Judy

Rev. J.C. Owens

Fredrick Freeman

Rev. Howard Gordon

Andre Stephens

Judy Matsouka

Dave Reagan

E.J. Miller

Carl & Gail Hillis

Flossie Moore

Dale Charles

Basil Kyriakakis

Melba Collins

Perry Hayes

Glenda Cooper

Linda Polk

Barry Haas

Board Members, 2006

Grainger Ledbetter

Rev. J.C. Owens

Tom McGowan

Curtis Mangrum

Rev. Howard Gordon	Basil Kyriakakis
Alice Lightle	
Judy Matsuoka	<u>Board Members, 2008</u>
E.J. Miller	E.J. Miller
Flossie Moore	Linda Carnahan
Perry Hayes	Rev. Howard Gordon
Maria Christina Moroles	Perry Hayes
Linda Polk	Basil Kyriakakis
Basil Kyriakakis	Rev. J.C. Owens
<u>Board Members, 2007</u>	Maria Cristina Moroles
Rev. J.C. Owens	Barry Haas
Curtis Mangrum	Rev. Mary Purifoy
Rev. Howard Gordon	Margarita Solarzano
Barry Haas	<u>Board Members, 2009</u>
E.J. Miller	Alejandro Aviles
Perry Hayes	Linda Carnahan
Maria Christina Moroles	Rev. Howard Gordon
Linda Polk	Barry Haas

Parry Hayes

Fannie Fields

Rev. Howard Gordon

Basil Kyriakakis

Barry Haas

Curtis Mangrum

Curtis Mangrum

Rev. J.C. Owens

Rev. J.C. Owens

Rev. Mary Purifoy

Rev. Mary Purifoy

Margarita Solorzano

Margarita Solorzano

Board Members, 2010

Chandra Anderson

Alejandro Aviles

Betty Cole

Appendix F: Grassroots Organizing

Below is a list of the communities the Panel has worked with since 1998.

Bearden	Strong, Concerned Citizens of Strong
Camden	Thornton
Chidester	Tollette
East Camden	Waldo
El Dorado	Wilmar
Garland	England
Gurdon	Marvell, Concerned Citizens of the Marvell area
Huttig Concerned Citizens	Helena Concerned Parent Group
Louann Action Project	Arkadelphia
Magnolia	Dermott
Malvern	Dumas, Concerned Citizens of Dumas
Monticello NAACP	Eudora Advocates for Change
Prescott Community Group	Gould Citizen Advisory Committee
Stamps Citizens in Action	Grady
Stephens, Concerned Citizens of	Holly Grove
Stephens	

Lake Village Concerned Citizens	Springdale
McGehee	Russellville
Mitchellville	Green Briar
Montrose	Cadron Creek area
Oakwood Bayou	Hot Springs
Parkdale	Woodbury
Pine Bluff, New Pine Bluff Coalition for Fairness and Equality, Women on the Move	<u>Project or Regional Groups</u> Tomato farmers in northeast Arkansas
Reed	Arkansans for Responsible Gas Development
Wabaseka/Alzheimer Unified School Concerned Parents	<u>Statewide Groups</u> Arkansas Opportunity to Learn campaign
Warren	Arkansas Farm-Community Alliance
Wilmot Concerned Citizens	Arkansas Citizens First Congress
West Memphis	
Fayetteville	

Appendix G: Foundation Support

Below is a list of foundations and charities that have funded the Arkansas Public Policy Panel.

Acorn Fund	Edwards Mother Earth Foundation
Arkansas Community Foundation Black Hall of Fame	Environmental Support Center
Arkansas Community Foundation	Ford Foundation
Belvedere Fund of Rockefeller Family Fund	Fund for the State Coalitions
Ben & Jerry's Foundation	Funding Exchange
C.S. Mott Foundation	Greensboro Justice Fund
Campaign for Human Development	Herb Block Foundation
Consumer Federation of America	J.S. Noyes Foundation
Corporation for National and Community Service	M. C. Wray Charitable Trust
Deer Creek Foundation	Marguerite Casey Foundation
Democracy South	Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
Edward W. Hazen Foundation	McKnight Foundation
	National Rural Funders Collaborative
	Northeast Environmental Policy Center

New World Foundation	Southern Education Foundation
Norman Foundation	Southern Organizing Cooperative
Open Society Institute	Southern Partners Fund
Ottinger Foundation	State Environmental Leadership Program
Piper Fund	Threshold Foundation
Presbyterian Hunger Fund	Tides Foundation, Beldon Fund
Progressive Technology Project	University of Arkansas
Rural School and Community Trust	W. K. Kellogg Foundation
Schott Foundation for Public Education	Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation
Sisters St. Francis of Philadelphia	

Appendix H: Arkansas Historic Consulting Firm Proposal

Project Proposal – Arkansas Public Policy Panel

Prepared by Arkansas Historic Consulting Firm

Introduction

The Arkansas Public Policy Panel (APPP) is a statewide non-profit organization that has long held certain core values within an evolving mission. Such values include encouragement of diversity, as well as social and economic justice. The APPP has also focused its efforts towards organizing, educating, and supporting varied citizen groups across Arkansas for more inclusiveness in the political process through a statewide coalition. Since its formation in 1963 as the Panel of American Women (PAW) to the present, the APPP has focused its efforts towards various social concerns ranging from education and civil rights to tax reform and environmental issues.

The Master of Arts in Public History program at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) has had the pleasure of producing professional final products of historical narratives for nearly thirty years for various institutions, organizations, and groups in Arkansas. Under the guidance of the UALR's Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Deborah J. Baldwin, the Arkansas Historic Consulting Firm (AHCF), a nine person team of graduate students participating in the Master of Arts in Public History seminar class, will produce a publishable organizational history of the APPP.

This project will be completed by use of oral histories, extensive research of primary and secondary sources, and interpretation of the APPP's archival materials. The

final product will include an executive summary, an historical narrative, oral history interviews in digital format and their transcriptions, a historical timeline of the APPP, a literature review, a bibliographic essay, this project proposal, and a digital format of the final product in its entirety.

AHCF is committed to sharing the history of the APPP. This consultant group understands the important role the APPP has had in seeking justice for Arkansans. With the organization's fiftieth anniversary approaching, this is an ideal time to document the APPP's history. AHCF is honored to be a part of preserving the history of such efforts in Arkansas.

Objectives and Methodology

The AHCF will research and compile the history of the APPP starting with its origins in the 1960s until present. The AHCF will cover the history of the APPP by focusing on thematic arcs over the course of decades, including influential members who had major roles, significant events, challenges faced by the organization, structural and strategic changes made, contributions made to various communities across Arkansas, and expansion in numbers and focus. The goal of this project is to place the APPP in a proper historical context on the local and national levels. The AHCF will conclude the project by describing the APPP's current focus, organizational structure, and its role in present day Arkansas.

The research will be obtained through the papers donated to UALR's Center for Arkansas History and Culture (CAHC), manuscript collections at the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, oral histories from people involved with the Panel, and a collection of papers at the University of Arkansas. Other organizations including PAW and the Citizens

First Congress will be included in the history to obtain an accurate portrayal of the origins and evolution of the APPP. The project will also explore the context in which the events took place on a national scale.

The documents located at the Arkansas Studies Institute will be divided and researched evenly among the AHCF consultants while every person will search for secondary sources. Each member of the group will write a section of the final product that will be broken down in to chronological increments based on major turning points of the organization. Research notes will be shared among the group to guarantee wide access to the documents.

Literature Review

The AHCF will make use of available primary and secondary sources in order to detail and develop an extensive bibliography regarding APPP's history. As APPP has gone through significant changes throughout its history in regards to the range and scope of its work within the state of Arkansas, it will be necessary to draw from multiple bodies of secondary literature including progressive women's movements of the mid-Twentieth century, welfare reform groups, and community organizing groups in order to have complete and balanced view of the role that the APPP plays within the state of Arkansas as well as where it fits as a community organizing group on a national level.

While knowledge of the secondary literature will be essential in creating a complete history of the APPP, the primary research focus of the group lies in the papers of the APPP which are located at the Arkansas Studies Institute under the care of the UALR's CAHC. These papers, dating back to the 1970s, contain a wealth of information that will provide necessary details that will assist the AHCF in collecting oral histories

and the final written portion of the project. Also located at the Arkansas Studies Institute are the papers of PAW, which will provide much information about the origins and early years of the APPP, as well as the papers of Brownie Ledbetter, which contain information about organizations and issues that were important to her. Additionally, the collection of Arkansas newspapers owned by the Arkansas History Commission will be invaluable as a source for exploring the public perception and relationships that the APPP has with state media groups.

Chronological Narrative

Using the secondary literature, the AHCF will create a narrative of the history of the APPP from its creation in the 1960's to the present. The research will look at the origins of the APPP from its time as PAW and its goals and impact on equality issues, to its evolution into the APPP and the change of goals and organizational structure. Each time period will be researched by two AHCF consultants and will include important people, events, and accomplishments of the APPP. The project will focus upon the following themes:

- **Origins, Creation, and Development**
 - Examine the foundation and formation of the APPP leading to the activities and changes over time within the APPP.
- **Changes of goals**
 - Outline the change in policy from the initial founding of the APPP
- **Organization**
 - Identify changes of the major operations of the APPP in function, day to day operations, funding, and control

- **Organizational Structure**

- Look at the hierarchy of the APPP during its formation and the organizational changes through the decades.

Oral Histories

The AHCF, in order to capture a more complete and vivid history of the APPP, will conduct eighteen oral history interviews. These interviews will be a vital part of the research process for our team. The interviewees will be selected from a list given to us by the APPP, and will consist of founders, former board members, staff, funders, consultants, and others closely associated with the APPP.

The AHCF will provide a release form that must be signed by the interviewer and interviewee before the interviews begin. The form will give permission to UALR's CAHC to store the interviews in their collections and make available for researchers and other institutions. It will also give permission to UALR to use the interviews and transcripts either in whole or part for educational and/or public use. The interviewee will have the option to place restrictions on the use of the materials. These restrictions and the date of the restrictions must be noted on the release form.

The interviews will take place at a time and place of the interviewees choosing. The AHCF will have a list of previously designated questions, but this list serves only as a guide, as each interviewee will have different perspectives and memories of the APPP. All interviewees will be given an opportunity to discuss things they want archived recording the APPP.

Historical Timeline

The AHCF will provide a wide-ranging timeline to exemplify the growth and development of the APPP. The APPP is a state wide nonprofit organization that traces its origins back to PAW, founded in 1963. The timeline will begin with these origins and extend into current times reviewing the history of the APPP and how they have faced and dealt with a series of issues in Arkansas, including civil rights, education, economic justice and development, agriculture, environment, and government and corporate accountability.³⁰⁵

Project Phases

The AHCF developed four specific phases to fulfill the objective of the APPP research project in securing a history of their organization from its origins to present. The phases include planning, research, production, and presentation of a multi-volume publication to meet the APPP's expectations. The final publication, or product, will examine and expose APPP's history chronologically through its evolution both as an internal organization as well as its public mission in community organizing. Among the most crucial aspects of the project will include the examination of those who played a key role in the development and evolution of the APPP that has led to its success as a non-profit organization in Arkansas.

During the planning phase, the AHCF will focus on gathering information pertinent to the project including the examination of archives on the APPP and oral history interviews with current and previous APPP staff and members. The AHCF will

³⁰⁵ "Arkansas Public Policy Panel."

<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=2576>.

assist the APPP in identifying interviewees with diverse backgrounds to ensure a more comprehensive and accurate portrayal of the APPP over the chronology of its existence.

The AHCF will appropriate dates and deadlines for researching, writing, approving, and completing the project in a professional manner and will provide primary resources when available from various archival repositories in Arkansas. This phase will focus specifically on the APPP papers donated to UALR's CAHC, spanning the first few decades of its existence, consisting of seventy-one boxes.

In addition to the papers at UALR's CAHC, AHCF consultants will also mine electronic sources of information including on-line archives and other resources including newspapers and journal articles. They will then organize and complete a series of oral histories while incorporating pertinent information into the final product. One of the two volumes will consist of transcriptions of the oral histories in their entirety.

The production phase will include the compilation and editing of traditional research and accompanying oral histories and other primary and secondary source material into a comprehensive and cohesive history of the APPP by the AHCF.

The final phase of this project will include the developing and production of a hard copy as well as a digital copy of the final product, which the AHCF will present to the APPP in a formal setting to be determined.

Project Staff

Rachel Jeffries, Project Manager

Rachel Jeffries graduated with a B.A. in History from Southeast Missouri State University in May 2007. She was employed as an Educator and Curator at the Missouri State Museum in Jefferson City, Missouri from 2008 to 2011. Jeffries is currently a

graduate assistant at the William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Library and will graduate in May 2013 with a Master of Arts in Public History from UALR.

Sarah Riva, Reports Manager

Sarah Riva graduated with B.A. honors in History from Royal Holloway, University of London in July 2010. Riva is currently a graduate assistant for UALR's Institute on Race and Ethnicity and will graduate in May 2013 with a Master of Arts in Public History from UALR. In 2012, she was awarded the Lucille Westbrook Local History Award, presented by the Arkansas Historical Association, and her article, "Desegregating Downtown Little Rock: The Field Reports of SNCC's Bill Hansen, October 23, to December 3, 1962" was published in the Autumn volume of the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*.

Britany Simmons, Oral History Manager

Britany Simmons graduated with a B.A. in Anthropology and French with a minor in linguistics from UALR in May 2009. She is currently a graduate assistant at the Arkansas Studies Institute and will graduate in May 2013 with a Master of Arts in Public History from UALR. Simmons also works as a student clerk and educational assistant at the William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Library. In 2012, Simmons was awarded the Digital History Class Project Award for her creation of an online museum exhibit entitled "White Water Tavern: A Look into the Past."

Leah Berry, Consultant

Leah Berry graduated with a B.A. in Secondary Education: History and Political Science from Arkansas Tech University in May 2010. She is a part-time student in the Master of Arts in Public History program at UALR where she will graduate in the

summer of 2013. Berry is currently a social studies teacher at Rison High School located in the Cleveland County School District. She began teaching in August 2011 after passing the Praxis III Assessment. In April 2012 she was awarded her Arkansas State Teachers' Licensure.

Megan Dunaway, Consultant

Megan Dunaway graduated with a B.A. in History from the University of Arkansas in December 2010. She will graduate with a Master of Arts in Public History from UALR in May 2013. Dunaway has been employed as an administrative assistant at the Old State House Museum in Little Rock since July 2011 and recently was promoted to registrar. She is currently serving on the Capitol Area Advisory Committee for the Capitol Zoning District Commission.

Dewey Dykes, Consultant

Dewey Dykes graduated with a B.A. in History from the University of Arkansas in May 2011. He served as a graduate assistant for the Law and Civil Rights in Arkansas project at UALR during the 2011-2012 school year and is currently a graduate assistant in collection management at the William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Library. He will graduate with a Master of Arts in Public History from UALR in May 2013.

J.D. Gatlin, Consultant

J.D. Gatlin graduated with a B.A. in History from Harding University in May 2011. He will graduate with a Master of Arts Public History in May 2013 from UALR. Gatlin is currently a tour guide at the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum.

Ron Kelley, Consultant

Ron Kelley graduated with a B.A. in History from UALR in 2003. He will graduate with a Master of Arts in Public History in May 2013 from UALR. Kelley is currently employed by the Delta Cultural Center in Helena, Arkansas as historical researcher for the Department of Arkansas Heritage. Kelley is also an exhibit designer and collections manager of the Phillips County Museum. He has coauthored a book entitled *Harvest of Death* and is working on a six-volume series on Arkansas in the Civil War.

Adrienne McGill, Consultant

Adrienne McGill graduated with B.A. honors in History from UALR in May 2011. McGill was the first undergraduate to go through the honors program in UALR's History Department after successfully completing her B.A. thesis, "The Emergence of Black Nationalism and the Nation of Islam." McGill is currently a graduate assistant for UALR's CAHC and will graduate with a Master of Arts in Public History from UALR in December 2013. In 2012, McGill became the first beneficiary of the Little Rock Nine Endowment Scholarship. That same year she was inducted into the Alpha Epsilon Lambda Honorary Society.